THE UNMASKING OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN MEXICO: THE EZLN DISCOURSE ON DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT

by

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The Unmasking of Civil Society in Mexico: The EZLN Discourse on Democratic Development

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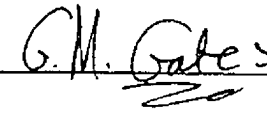

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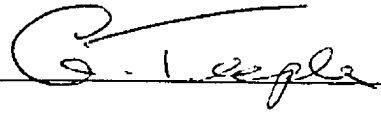

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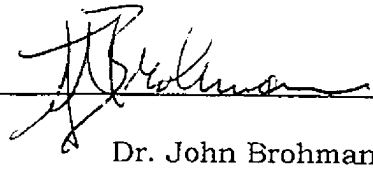

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Abstract

Millions of Mexicans have mobilized since 1 January 1994 partially in response to an indigenous rebellion in Chiapas and the discourse of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional-EZLN). They are challenging the ideological underpinnings of neoliberal reform and calling for a revitalized nationalism based on principles of democracy, justice and liberty.

Modernization's benefits failed to reach the poor majority while the corporate system of political representation appears incapable of providing the State with the legitimacy necessary to rule. Chiapas is an example of "ungovernability", compelling the government to rule through military and political violence. Human and civil rights demands, broadly conceived in the declarations and discourse of the EZLN, highlight the failure of neoliberal policies in satisfying basic human needs for all.

This thesis analyzes current social movements in Chiapas in the context of the prevailing authoritarian and inequitable socio-political and economic structures that impede democratic practice. It also examines how the discourse of the Zapatistas is extending the thrust of organizations of civil society to challenge the entrenched party of the State, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional-PRI), at all levels of Mexican society.

Theories of liberation theology, development, and social movements are discussed which elucidate the motives and opportunities that propel civil society and the pro-democracy movements in their quest for political transformation. The theoretical focus is based on radical critiques of a globalized development enterprise. Development is represented as socially constructing the Third World.

The analysis is based on ten months of participant-observation in Chiapas between 1993 and 1996 as well as document and media research both in Canada and Mexico. The methodology reflects the researcher's involvement in an act of solidarity with a number of informants and social organizations. This work is thus a testimony whose intention is to support and augment the struggle in Mexico for democratization and human rights.

Dedication

To my Mother and Father

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the people of Chiapas who so warmly and openly accepted me into their lives. Without their confidence and trust this thesis could not have been written. I appreciate the guidance and support given to me by my supervisors , the faculty and staff of the Sociology and Anthropology Department of Simon Fraser University. Finally I am grateful for the support from friends and family who were there to comfort or assist me with this project when it was needed.

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List of Acronyms

AEDPCH	Asemblea Estatal Democrático del Pueblo Chiapaneco (Chiapan Peoples Democratic State Assembly)
CANACO-Mex	Cámara Nacional de Comercio de la Ciudad de México (National Chamber of Commerce of Mexico)
CCRI-CG	Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena-Comandancia General (Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee-General Command)
CEB	Comunidades Eclisiales de Base (Christian Base Community)
CELAM	Latin American Bishops' Conference
CEOIC	Consejo Estatal de Organizaciones Indígenas y Campesinas (State Council of Indigenous and Peasant Organizations)
CEPAL	Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean)
CIMECH	Centro de Investigaciones Mesoamericanos Chiapanecos (Centre for Historical Research on Mesoamerica and Chiapas)
CIOAC	Central Independiente de Obreros Agrcolas y Campesinos (Independent Confederation of Agricultural Workers and Peasants)
CNC	Confederación Nacional de Campesinos (National Peasant Confederation
CND	Convención Nacional Democrático (National Democratic Convention)
CNOP	Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Populares (National Confederation of Popular Organizatons)
Cocopa	Comisión de Concordia y Pacificación (Commission for Harmony and Pacification)
Conai	Comisión Nacional de Intermediación (National Commission for Intermediation)
CONPAZ	Coordinación de Organizaciones por la Paz (Coordination of Non Governmental Organizations for Peace)
CTFCA	Christian Task Force on Central America

CTM	Confederación de Trabajadores de México (Confederation of Mexican Workers)
DESMI	Desarrollo Economico Social de los Mexicanos Indígenas (Socio-economic Development of Mexican Indigenous People)
ESPAZ	Espacio Civil por la Paz (Civil Space for Peace)
EZLN	Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista National Liberation Army)
FDN	Frente Democrático Nacional (National Democratic Front)
FNOC	Ferderación Nacional de Organizaciones y Ciudadanos (National Federation of Citizens and Organizations)
ICFHRDD	International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development
INMECAFE	Instituto Mexicano del Café (Mexican Coffee Institute)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INAREMAC	Instituto de Asesora Antropológica para la Región Maya, A.C. (Institute of Anthropology for the Maya Region)
INI	Instituto Nacional Indgenista (National Indigenous Institute)
MLN	Movimiento Nacional de Liberación (National Liberation Movement)
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement (Tratado de Libre Comercio)
NGO	Non governmental Organization
OCEZ	Organización Campesina Emiliano Zapata (Emiliano Zapata Peasant Organization)
PAN	Partido de Acción Nacional (National Action Party)
PRD	Partido de la Revolución Democrática (Democratic Revolutionary Party)
PRONASOL	Programa Nacional de Solidaridad (National Solidarity Program)
PROCAMPO	Programa de Apoyos Directos al Campo (Program for Direct Supports to the Countryside)
PMS	Partido Mexicano Socialista (Mexican Socialist Party)
PNR	Partido Nacional Revolutionario (National Revolutionary Party)

PRI	Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party)
UU	Unión de Uniones (Union of Ejido Unions and Peasant Organizations)

INTRODUCTION

"Our voice began its journey centuries ago and will never again be silenced." (Communiqué from the CCRI-CG of the EZLN[1], Mexico, January 11, 1994)

Indigenous peoples' stories often are not told in the mainstream media. The uprising in Chiapas of January 1, 1994 is a notable exception. A well trained and organized Mayan army captured the national imagination in Mexico by strategic use of the print media. Through regular communiqués, declarations, and judicious interviews it promoted its cause and mobilized support both nationally and internationally. Above all, the movement has constructed a powerful critique of the Mexican government's current economic projects of neoliberal economic reform and development, and successfully communicated this to Mexican civil society.

The Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) is waging a moral war with "bombs of information" (Bishop Samuel Ruiz García; speech in August, 1994, San Cristóbal de las Casas) which question and challenge the prevailing development model, described as unjust and potentially genocidal. Twelve days of fighting and a media spotlight put on their struggle, helped create the space where their voices could be heard. The essentially moral war of words is focused in their discourse on democracy and development.

This thesis is about the EZLN discourse on democratizing development. The participation of civil society in the reconfiguration of development is a central theme. It is interpreted as an attempt to redefine development as a holistic concept; giving it a political, social, and cultural meaning by beginning to listen to the voices of peoples who feel their very existence is

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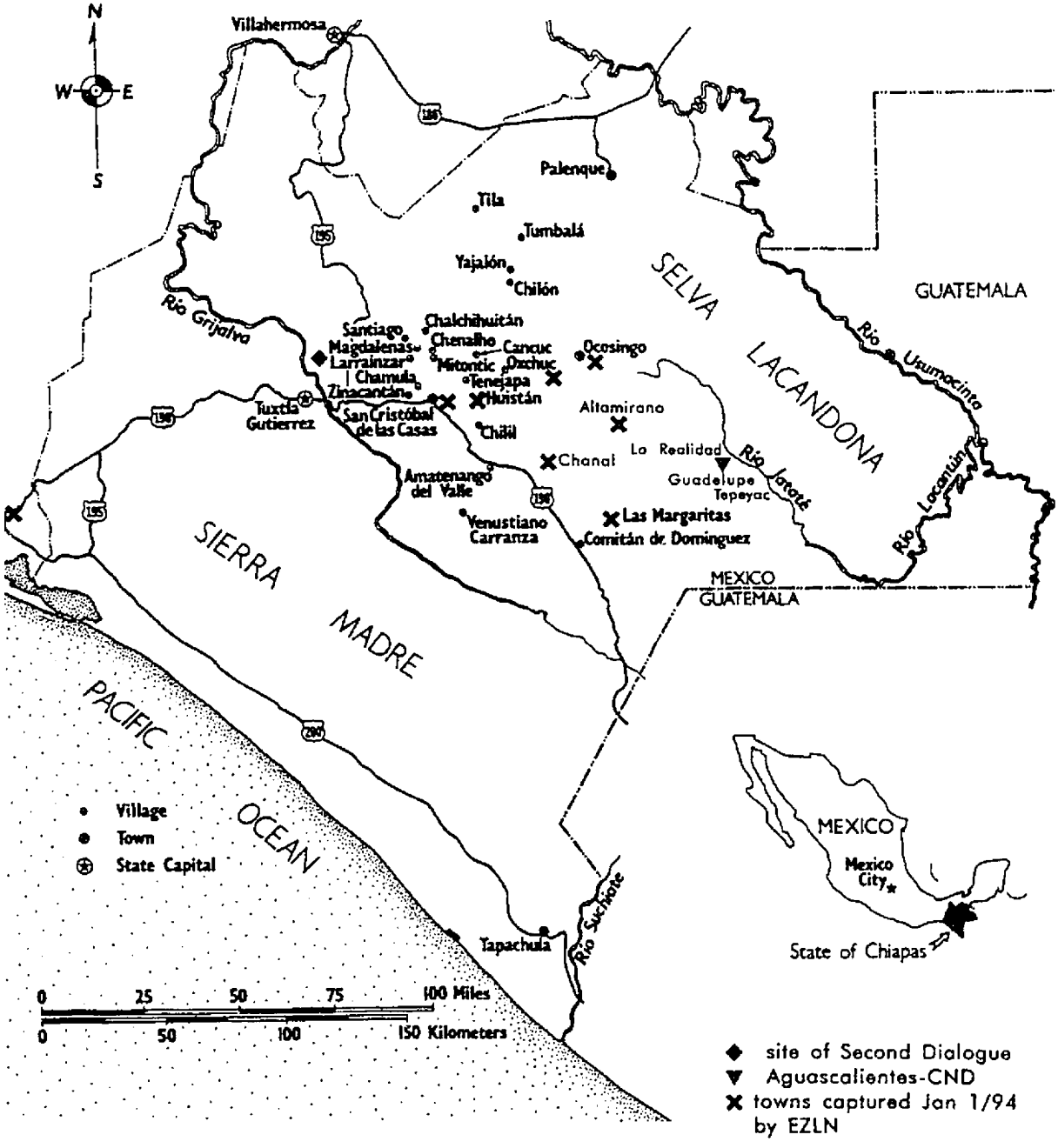
[1] The CCRI-CG is the Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena-Comandancia General (the Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee-General Command) of the EZLN, the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (the Zapatista National Liberation Army). The CCRI-CG is a council of indigenous representatives of four ethnic groups of Maya-the Tzotzil, Tseltal, Tojolobal, and Chol. This body is the supreme decision-making authority of the army but claims it takes its direction from the indigenous communities which are its base.

Fig.1- Villages of Highland Chiapas and Conflict Zone



Adapted from JV Cotter & JD Nations:1984

threatened. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) symbolizes this threat to the indigenous of Chiapas.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Fieldwork for the thesis was carried out between 1993 and 1996. The collection of data on local social action was done largely while participating in the everyday lives of people actively involved in opposing the political and social status quo in one of the eastern *municipios* (Canadian equivalent of a county) captured by and now partially under the control of the EZLN.

Additionally, during the 1994 election, I was an international observer in an area of northern Chiapas known for its sympathy to the Zapatista movement and the strength of indigenous organization. In 1996, I worked voluntarily with the Chiapan coalition of non-governmental organizations (NGO), CONPAZ (Coordinatión of Non-governmental Organizations for Peace) in organizing security aspects of the second round of negotiations between the government and the EZLN which began in April 1995.

Another major field site was San Cristóbal de las Casas, the regional centre of Bishop Ruiz's diocese and the old state capital until the mid 19th century. (For the location of San Cristóbal de las Casas and the villages of highland Chiapas see Figure 1.) San Cristóbal is the academic and cultural centre of the highlands region of Chiapas and the administrative home of the state's major NGOs. San Cristóbal hosted the first Dialogue between the government and the insurgents, and was the site of the majority of the major mobilizations of Chiapan civil society in 1994.

In this city, I monitored the Mexican national press daily, and did document research principally in the Instituto de Asesora Antropológica para la Región Maya, A.C.-Institute of Anthropology for the Maya Region (INAREMAC), Centro de Investigaciones Historicos Mesoamericanos y Chiapanecos-the Centre for Historical Research on Mesoamerica and

Chiapas (CIMECH), and the library of the Centro de Estudios Universitarios-Centre for University Studies. I conducted semi-structured interviews with other researchers for example Andres Aubrey of INAREMAC, Cynthia Steele of Washington University, and anthropologist Xóchitl Leyva Solano; church people including Bishop Ruiz, a parish priest, nuns and catechists, and community members of Christian Base Communities and other civic action groups in one *municipio*; foreign and Mexican journalists especially during the 1994 negotiations and the presidential election; and finally Chiapan NGO personnel.

Primary data such as documents produced by movements, leaflets, propaganda, bulletins and meeting reports were collected from civic groups, NGOs and political candidates. I also attended press conferences given by the Bishop and the government negotiator, Manuel Camacho Solís during the 1994 Dialogue in San Cristóbal.

In all, between 1993 and 1996 I spent ten months in the state and was able to witness the numerous public manifestations of the civilian struggle for political transformation such as marches, meetings and sit-ins. I worked under the climate of fear, hostility and instability that war produces. This anthropological work is thus, a testimony, the result of an act of "witnessing" and participation (Nancy Scheper-Hughes,1992; Fergusson,1994; Turner,1992). As a result the thesis contains explicit moral assumptions about the goals of the protagonists. This also has influenced the theoretical positions taken in my arguments. Nancy Scheper-Hughes sums up such an approach to anthropological fieldwork:

> Our medium, our canvas, is 'the field', a place both proximate and intimate (because we have lived some part of our lives there) as well as forever distant and unknowably 'other' (because our own destinies lie elsewhere). In the act of 'writing culture', what emerges is always a highly subjective, partial, and fragmentary-but also deeply felt and personal record of human lives based on eye-witness and testimony. The act of witnessing is what lends our work its moral (at times its almost theological) character. So-called participant observation has a way of drawing the ethnographer into spaces of human life where she and he might really prefer not to go at all and once there doesn't know how to go about getting out except through writing, which draws others there as well, making them party to the act of witnessing. (1992:xii)

Opposing social actors perspectives however, are not well represented because of the polarized positions of the subjects of investigation. Engagement with one "side" precluded associations with the "other", particularly in a climate of such harsh conflict, threats, distrust and fear.

My principle informants are part of international Church, human rights, solidarity and other NGO networks whose connections to myself and Canada are with Canadian NGOs and the ecumenical movement. I am therefore both a subject seeking to understand a social process and at the same time, involved in the dynamic of this process. This is manifested in human rights and solidarity work that I am engaged in in Canada, and to a lesser extent in Mexico. It also relates to the development work I have done in Canada and abroad for the last 13 years.

Research data that would implicate informants in illegal acts or reveal their direct connections with illegal groups like the EZLN could not be used, likewise many people and places are not identified, out of respect for the trust and confidence given to me by my informants. The research period was one of heightened repression against government opponents that actually resulted in the arrest and incarceration of one informant and the flight of another from Chiapas for a period of time. Others have appeared on so-called "black lists" within the *municipio* and many have received death threats.

UNMASKING CIVIL SOCIETY

The Zapatistas' violent reaction to Mexico's current wave of modernization has a highly symbolic dimension which has in turn, effectively been used by them to question the well-worn national myths and symbols of the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1917. Emiliano Zapata, the original Zapatista, led the southern peasant revolutionary army in the first decades of this century, fighting for agrarian reform and the restitution of indigenous communal lands. *Zapatismo*, epitomized in Zapata's revolutionary slogans, "land and liberty", "land for those who work it", and "its better to die fighting on your feet than live on your knees", echoes in the

hearts and the rhetoric of several generations of Mexico's underclasses. The Chiapan insurgents reappropriated *Zapatismo* to symbolize their resistance and survival in this new age of global restructuring.

Successive Mexican presidents also appropriated Zapata as a heroic and revolutionary national symbol even though he was assassinated by competitive political factions in 1919 which ultimately diluted the revolutionary reforms Zapata fought for. The price that post-revolutionary political leaders paid in 1917 to begin consolidating the Revolution, was the incorporation of peasant demands into the Mexican Constitution in Article 27.[2] This institutionalized agrarian reform and allowed the State to recreate traditional indigenous communal forms of land tenure known as *ejidos* and *comunidades agrarias*.[3]

Populism and corporatism were also key political instruments used in the consolidation of the Revolution, honed by General Lázaro Cárdenas in the 1930s. These mechanisms maintained the authoritarian power of succeeding Mexican regimes and state oligarchies. The thesis examines how Zapatista discourse and the new *Zapatismo* contributes to the emergence a long dormant civil society challenging the legitimacy of Mexico's exclusive decision-making structure.

The division between the state and civil society according to Gramsci, is defined by the state's ability to coerce. Civil society is the aspect of the social order denoting social relations

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[2] Article 27 declared all land to be owned by the nation which had the right to transmit it to individuals and to create private property. In the statute the state also had an obligation and the right to expropriate any private property necessary for the public good. This became the legal instrument used to carry out land redistribution amongst landless peasants after 1917.

[3] Neil Harvey refers to these lands as the "social sector" in contrast to private sector commercial lands. *Ejido* refers to lands redistributed through the break up of private lands or through the colonization of unused national lands. *Comunidades agrarias* (*comunidades* for short) describe lands historically held by indigenous communities as well as lands recovered through petitions to government agencies. These lands had been lost by the encroachment of private owners particularly in the pre-revolutionary period known as the *Porfiriato* (1876-1910), when the indigenous lost 90 percent of their traditional lands (1994:2). The *ejido* is a form of of peasant usufruct land tenure combining communal title vested in the state with individual rights to land worked individually or collectively. Until the January 1992 amendment to Article 27 of the 1917 Constitution, *ejidal* lands could not be sold, mortgaged, leased or otherwise alienated, although in practice such contraventions have been widespread. Holders of such land titles, *ejidatarios* and *comuneros*, have the right to use the land and pass it to legal heirs.

and forms of association which embody them. They are typically spontaneous, customary and not generally dependent upon law. Civil society is set apart from the state or public apparatus which is defined by Gramsci by its monopoly on coercion. The groupings of civil society have no permanent electoral agendas and tend to be inclusive, local or regional, and independent of government. Gramsci includes the family, churches, trade unions, cultural associations, political parties and intellectual groups (Simon,1982:68-69). Importantly, civil society is the site of struggle for political and ideological hegemony in the Gramscian sense (1982:67-79). Out of this struggle should emerge a consensus supporting one ruling group or another thus legitimizing a particular group, its leadership and a form of governance. Therefore Simon emphasizes, Gramsci conceives "the life of a state as 'a continuous process of formation and superceding of unstable equilibria'" (1982:67).

In Gramsci's conception hence, the organization of hegemony (i.e. consent for the leadership of the dominant class or class fraction) and hence its legitimization, is carried out by the institutions and organizations of civil society (1982:26). Furthermore, Simon points out, that: "Gramsci is proposing a far-reaching modification of the classical Marxist theory of the nature of power." in that power is spread out through civil society while at the same time manifested in the coercive capability of the state (1982:72). Harvey asserts that: "In Mexico such a division is blurred as an expanded State apparatus has permeated virtually all sectors of civil society" by organizing the main sectors of civil society into corporate entities and affiliating them with the governing party (Harvey,1989:5). Similarly, the State has tightly controlled the emergence of a viable political opposition and thus the politics of pluralism in Mexico. This is why Mexico has been labeled "the perfect dictatorship" by one critic.

As a political force, civil society in Mexico has been characterized by the EZLN as "asleep" or "masked". Nevertheless, various sectors have played key social roles in advancing rural and indigenous movements for at least the last twenty years. Notably in Chiapas, some NGOs, grassroots civic groups, independent peasant organizations and the so-called progressive

Catholic Church in the diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas, have facilitated the organization of rural people particularly over the last twenty years.

These groups have created support mechanisms and information networks that respond to state repression and anti-democratic tendencies. They have also reinforced and invigorated critical consciousness and collective solidarity amongst rural populations. Moreover, a significant number of individuals and groups within civil society have now allied themselves with the cause of the EZLN especially since the 1994 Rebellion and the August 1994 presidential election. However, internal divisions and conflicts frequently characterize these groups even though they show a strength and dynamism marked by what Harvey calls "mutual affirmation of autonomy from government-controlled organizations" (Harvey;1989;3). Today consequently, an informed and powerful civil resistance movement is going on in Chiapas.

The main questions posed in this thesis are:

1) Why and how is the legitimacy of the State being challenged by the EZLN and a significant part of civil society in Chiapas?
2) How and why does the discourse of the EZLN respond to a broad base of concerns within civil society?
3) How can the impact of emergent social movements on the political system be assessed?

These are important questions because the answers reveal the broader dimensions of what initially appeared to be the struggle of a relatively small and local group of indigenous people. What I witnessed over the period of research is a lengthy process of negotiation, concession, mediation and dialogue about the democratization of development. The rapid expansion of support for the Zapatista movement in response to their discourse points to the existence of a more generalized and historical struggle nationally to transform the relations between the Mexican State and civil society.

THE MODERNIZATION PROJECT AND CIVIL SOCIETY

By all the conventional, quantitative indicators of development Chiapas illustrates the failure of attempts to bring about a more socially just society by using economic policies based on liberal and neoliberal reformist doctrines. This southern-most state which is predominantly rural and indigenous, has one of the highest levels of extreme poverty in Mexico. Yet Thomas Benjamin points out that Chiapas is a "rich land" (Benjamin:1989). However, for centuries, Chiapas has been characterized by widespread social conflict, institutional violence, political corruption and human rights abuse. These contradictions between wealth and poverty, the rule of law and anarchy, are not confined to Chiapas. Observers of the recent uprising reiterate that "Chiapas is Mexico" (Reding:1994).

What is typical and widespread in Mexico is the marginalization of the indigenous and rural populations despite the so-called post-revolutionary liberal reforms, especially the agrarian reform. The theme of "two Mexicos"--one backward and feudal, one modern--frequently has been used in analyzing this conundrum. The reformist solutions implicit in this dualist analysis suggest economic integration and cultural assimilation of subaltern classes (Frank, 1986:113). One thing that has been made clear by the new Zapatistas is that this is not an acceptable option for achieving their economic development goals and even less, for dealing with their cultural and social concerns about integrity and identity.

The last twenty years has witnessed a powerful resurgence of popular (grassroots) and independent rural and indigenous movements in Chiapas. These organizations vary in size, territorial extension, leadership and strategy (Harvey:1989;1990;1994). Moreover, they have begun to internationalize their struggles through networking, information sharing, cultural exchanges and the use of extra-national institutions as fora. The return of lands dispossessed through colonization, and the quest for human dignity are goals which link indigenous peoples spiritually across borders. They are motivated by identity and material survival in a world of apparently increasing cultural homogeneity and economic inequality.

The strategies advocated and employed by the EZLN and its allies in Chiapas in the 1990s are analyzed in the thesis. It examines the constraints current socio-political structures place on the achievement of their goals of agrarian reform and cultural reproduction. Historically, modernization has been an important national goal of the "imaginary Mexico" (Bonfil, 1989) of the political elite. Mexican political culture is the result of decades of oligarchic and authoritarian rule, and selective repression, and has a decisive influence on social movements, and the nature of political participation.

Symbolically, Mexico's "political culture" is represented by "the mask" that civil society wears. The Zapatistas have declared through their spokesperson Subcomandante Marcos that: "I am willing to take off my mask [referring to the ski masks the EZLN wear to conceal their identities] if Mexican society takes off the foreign mask [liberal ideology] that it anxiously put on years ago" (Marcos, Jan 20,1994, *El Tiempo*, Chiapas). The thesis thus considers the political behavior of Mexican civil society as historically linked with the development path that the country has followed at least since the days of the dictator Porfirio Díaz (1876-1910) (Nash & Sullivan,1992:13).

MEXICAN POLITICAL CULTURE AND LIBERAL IDEOLOGY

Mexico's ideological bias in rural development policy has been fraught with inconsistencies and contradictions as the State has attempted to negotiate social peace and at the same time, maintain the free market principle of accumulation of capital through private property. From a cultural perspective, agrarian policy especially the *ejido*, illustrates most clearly the clash between the goals of the State and Mexican rural/indigenous systems of production and reproduction. These alternative development paths highlight old forms of resistance and survival that today question total domination by national and global economic and cultural systems. Embodied in the EZLN discourse is the nature of this conflict.

Rural/indigenous culture and its continuance as a materially viable way of life, thus challenges development models driven exclusively by the ethos of economic growth, industrialization, global trade and modernization. The latter are political choices that the insurgents argue, threaten to destroy irrevocably another way of life and the pluri-ethnic identity of Mexico. Bonfil Batalla asserts, this constitutes the true cultural identity of the majority of Mexicans or as he describes it, "*México profundo*" (literally "profound Mexico") (Bonfil Batalla, 1987).

"*Hoy Decimos !Basta!*" ("Today We Say Enough") is the signal cry of the Zapatista National Liberation Army. In their declaration of war (The First Declaration from the Lacandon Jungle, December, 1993), they confirm their historical role of resistance to the Spanish (1519-1521), the French (1864-67), and the dictator Porfirio Díaz (1876-1910). They also point out the injustices they have suffered and the tyranny of the 70 year reign of the governing party, the Partido Institucional Revolucionario-Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI).

Chapter one examines this movement in the light of the responses of civil society in Mexico and Chiapas to the uprising on January 1, 1994. It analyzes the opening of political space created by the rebellion and the critical process of the "unmasking of civil society" going on in Mexican society today. Will there be a transition to democracy? Can the voice of the indigenous protagonists remain strong and united preventing the forces of cooptation from obscuring their cause, compromising their demands, and diminishing their thrust? Where is the potential clash of interests, competing pressure groups between the Zapatistas and their allies in civil society? What is the potential for a truly diverse, pluri-ethnic model within Mexican society? These questions unfold from a close reading of the EZLN discourse.

The voluminous writings of the movement are highlighted in chapter one to illustrate the nature and quality of the EZLN's revival of *Zapatismo*. The events of the Rebellion between January 1, 1994 and the spring of 1996, and Zapatista discourse, exemplify an analytical

framework and a set of assumptions akin to Foucault's theory of a "reverse discourse".[4] One of the distinguishing characteristics and outstanding achievements of the Zapatista movement has been its moral authority maintained by a consistently open dialogue with civil society.

Through its public actions and effective use of the national and international print media, the EZLN was able to capture and maintain the moral high ground with its discourse at a time when the government's legitimacy was being widely questioned. The intense interest in the events of the Rebellion and the persona of the EZLN spokesperson Subcomandante Marcos, thus provoked a media response favorable to the communication of the Zapatista vision to a broad and generally supportive audience. Consequently, their writings became a symbolic ground from which alternative frameworks of meaning could be produced about new ways of doing politics in Mexico. Social organizations all over Mexico have been able to take up their banner and use it to mobilize hundreds of thousands of people in acts of civil resistance.

Chapter two considers the political framework within which social movements and political participation traditionally occur in Mexico and Chiapas. It defines the structural limits within which negotiation and contestation take place and indicates the reason for the strategic importance of structural transformation in the discourse of the EZLN. Closely related to these questions of political structure are the political choices about economic development the State makes. Who decides, and who benefits from these decisions? Various theories of development thus, are briefly analyzed. New theory of social movements is then examined in order to situate current movements in Chiapas in a context of "new social movements" theory. What relation do these movements have to current processes of globalization, contemporary economic development models and cultural identity? Can they be distinguished from earlier movements on these grounds? What are their prospects for achieving radical social and political

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[4] A reverse discourse, according to David Slater, is one which offers a way of challenging and possibly breaking a system of domination. Citing Foucault, he asserts that it can be "a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy" (Slater, 1994:31). Arturo Escobar similarly proposes various counter discourses such as an "anti-development" discourse, discourses on difference, and discourses on "the fulfillment of democratic imaginary" as possible bases for the articulation of social struggles (Escobar,1992:430).

transformation (e.g. democratization)? How are they related to other struggles (e.g. environmental, women's)? What is the balance between, and significance of, local, regional and global concerns?

Culture and worldview[5] are considered key categories of analysis in this thesis because of the obvious clash of cultures that the EZLN conflict represents. Chapter three will look at "questions of fact and value" to highlight the normative context of the democracy and development debate. Taking this as the theoretical focus, the chapter will examine the convergence of the theories of liberation theology and proposals for alternatives to prevailing development orthodoxy. How do these theoretical positions concur with the values expressed in the discourse of the Maya insurgents? What is the convergence of values between this indigenous group and other groups in civil society regionally, nationally and internationally (e.g. environmentalists, urban workers and professionals)? Does the contemporary development model represent a worldview in and of itself? How do political structures perpetuate, support, uphold development as a worldview?

Chapter four is an historical and political account of the actual process of development in Chiapas. It describes how successive central and state governments imposed the prevailing model for economic growth and modernization on the indigenous of Chiapas. This is a tale of increasing impoverishment of the rural masses which at the same time blames the victim. This model's failure to create a prosperous regional economy, benefiting all social classes, was understood to be the result of backwardness or traditionalism among the "Indians", the corruption of peasants, farm workers and *ejidatarios*. Thomas Benjamin states, "The model of

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[5] Worldview in this thesis is defined as "systems of belief which through symbols and actions, mobilize the feelings and wills of human beings"..and are "an engine of social and moral continuity and change" (Smart,1983:1). Culture is the social construct that gives meaning to the life and actions of specifically defined human collectivities. Meanings are constituted through symbolic systems of belief, values, language and customary action. These patterns establish frameworks for everyday interactions between individuals, between individuals and human collectivities and between humans and the rest of the natural world. Cultural patterns and the behavior derived from culture undergo change alongside changes in the economic, social and political organization of society. This occurs because of the unique capacity of humans to be reflexive. Both culture and worldview contain prescriptive ideas on the merit of certain ways of life and cultural forms (Jary & Jary,1991:102).

modernization, although often adjusted and reinvigorated, was never doubted. And the intimate protection government provided private property against 'bandits', 'agitators', and 'communists' never faltered" (Benjamin, 1989:xvii).

Chiapas was colonized by the Spanish in the early 16th century and from some perspectives the indigenous remain a colonized people to this day because of Mexico's integrated system of cultural, political and economic domination by one political party for almost seventy years; and in Chiapas, because of the historical social and political control of descendants of landed elites that Benjamin refers to as "*la familia Chiapaneca*" (the Chiapan family) (Bonfil, 1987; Benjamin, 1989). Resistance hence, is directed against these seemingly monolithic structures that inhibit political participation, lack accountability and allow landowners and politicians to act with impunity.

Chapter five examines the mobilization of specific groups in civil society in Chiapas responding to the thrust of the EZLN discourse on democratic development. It analyzes the propulsion of social organizations into strong oppositional roles, illustrating the concept of civil society as a significant counter-force with the potential of breaking the dominance of the state-party system.[6] In the 1990s the agency of the Maya is played out by calling on the civil aspect of the social order to mobilize and join them in conceiving and creating a new political order.

The principal tool of the EZLN is dialogue and is based in the process of direct democracy practised in the rural communities and *ejidos* of Chiapas. In a dialogue with civil society, both in the print and electronic media, the Zapatistas, through the articulate and emotive writing and speeches of their spokesperson Subcomandante Marcos, appear to take on the role of pedagogues, similar to the role of elders in a village. They present their vision, they create

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[6] The terminology "state-party" or government party is used to refer to the dominance of the PRI as longest-ruling political party in the world. It also describes a system of structures and mechanisms which allow it to maintain this dominance. State-party characterizes a system where the identities, roles, and resources of the party (the PRI) and the institutions of the state are intertwined with the authoritarian powers of the presidency (Meyer, 1989:333-337).

opportunities for feedback (e.g.conventions, forums, referenda) and challenge civil society to figure out an alternative political structure that meets their ideal of a democratic development process. In other words, their discourse is clear on why a change is necessary but the "how to" is the challenge that civil society must take up.

This chapter examines over a four year period, how select groups within Chiapan civil society have risen to this challenge, what strategies they have adopted, and if and how they diverge from the Zapatista vision and from each other. What new state-civil society relationships have been forged? Who are the actors and what defines particular movements? What are the linkages nationally and internationally between groups and particular movements? Given the dynamism of movement creation, and the difficulties maintaining solidarity, what are the keys to assessing their efficacy in social change?

Finally, the conclusion summarizes and discusses the elements that have contributed to the expansion of social organizing nationally in Mexico. The Zapatista movement in Chiapas has been a key component in the formation of, and in the attempts to consolidate several national pro-democracy movements. Some of these have already fragmented and others are too recent to have achieved the unity necessary to present a concrete national agenda for action. Civil society nevertheless, has demonstrated its capacity to take up the Zapatista banner with each new crisis whether political, economic or social. Thus, *Zapatismo* and its corresponding discourse is posited as functioning as a countervailing force to the dominance of the historical regime of authoritarian rule in Mexico. The Mayan insurgents in Chiapas and their allies may as a consequence, become historical agents in the transformation of the Mexican political system.

CHAPTER 1

"HOY DECIMOS BASTA"[1]: EZLN DISCOURSE ON DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT

"For it is not just shooting off missiles on battlefields that sweeps away tyranny. It is also by hurling ideas of redemption, slogans of freedom and terrible anathema against the executors of the people that dictatorships are toppled and empires brought down...."(Emiliano Zapata, October 27, 1914)

The now famous "Ya basta!" (enough already!) of the EZLN symbolizes the final breakdown in an old set of power relations between the state-party system and important sectors of civil society. This relationship maintained relative social peace by its capacity "..to postpone political crises through a combination of co-optation and repression" (Harvey,1993:199). In Chiapas the rural poor, represented by the EZLN, declared an end to dependence on the government on 1 January 1994:

> Necessity brought us together and we said "Enough!" We no longer have the time or the will to wait for others to solve our problems. We have organized ourselves and we have decided to demand what is ours, taking up arms in the same way that the finest children of the Mexican people have done throughout our history. (First Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle, Dec 31/1993, CCRI-CG of EZLN, Chiapas)

This chapter is an analysis of Zapatista discourse in the context of the events of the on-going conflict in Chiapas. The strategies and tactics of a new *Zapatismo* are revealed through their published writings as much as by their actions. Similarly, their goals and political proposals for creating a new set of power relations are elaborated using cultural symbols both new and traditional. They are not interested, they say, in obtaining political power but rather in holding the State accountable for the injustice, poverty and discrimination that limits their existence. This section hence, attempts to expose the reader to a broad sample of what the indigenous of Chiapas have to say about themselves and their condition. This is an attempt to situate current political events in the cultural and social context of the lives of the rural people of Chiapas.

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[1] "Today we say enough!"

HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE AND RESISTANCE

Civil disobedience in Mexico or Chiapas is not a new phenomena, nor are massive demonstrations, political protest, and violence. Throughout most of the 1970s for instance, a tenacious guerilla movement was concentrated in the state of Guerrero (*Proceso*, no.901, Feb 7/94:36).[2] Now in addition to the EZLN insurgents, in June 1996, a new rural rebel group called the Peoples Revolutionary Army (Ejercíto Popular Revolucionario-EPR) surfaced in Guerrero, partially responding to extreme human rights abuse and violence by state authorities.[3] This is just one recent example of armed resistance to the selective government repression and institutionalized violence that has a long and carefully concealed history in Mexico.

In 1968, for instance, hundreds (the exact number has never been substantiated by government records) of pro-democracy student demonstrators, were massacred by government forces in Mexico City allegedly under the direction of Luis Echeverría Alvarez (president - 1970-76), then the minister in charge of these forces. Many were rounded up and jailed in the days following the attack. Some of the survivors of the student movement including reform-minded functionaries in state agencies and progressive priests and lay-ministers,

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[2] Three armed leftist groups existed in the 1970s, two in Guerrero led by Lucio Cabañas and Genaro Vásquez Rojas and an urban terrorist group, 23rd of September Communist League. Until the EZLN and the EPR, in the 1990s the only known armed revolutionary group is the PROCUP-PDLP (Partido Revolucionario Obrero Clandestino Unión del Pueblo y el Partido de los Pobres-Revolutionary Clandestine Workers Party, Union of the People and the Party of the Poor). This is mainly an urban-based group (Barry,1992:345).

[3] In June, 1995 in Guerrero, 70 police officers armed with automatic weapons, killed 17 *campesinos* (peasants) of the Oganización Campesina de la Sierra Sur-Southern Sierra Campesino Organization (OCSS) who were in a truck going to a protest rally. Two dozen others were wounded. On July 5, also in Guerrero, 12 members of a single family were attacked and killed and the lone 14 year old survivor says the attackers were police officers. On July 7, a convoy of police officers were ambushed and five were killed. Also in June, a lawyer and university professor in the Partido Revolucionario Democratico-Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD), Norberto Flores, was murdered in his office. 28 PRD members in all have died violently in Guerrero since December 1995.(*La Jornada, 7/2/95; Washington Post, 7/16/95; Anderson Valley Advertiser, 7/12/95*) More than a year later little has been done to bring those responsible to justice. After massive and persistent protests by the victim's families and their community, 10 police officers were charged with "abuse of authority" and president Zedillo finally called for the "resignation" of the governor of Guerrero, Ruben Figueroa, allegedly the intellectual author of these mass killings. His replacement is accused of being equally hard-line.

subsequently became involved in the promotion of rural movements; some by joining brigades that went to do "political" work in rural Chiapas in following decades (Harvey, 1993:201).[4]

A succession subsequently, of clandestine, organized militants known in Chiapas as the "*norteños*" (the northerners), schooled in the doctrines of Marx and Mao and the violence of urban protest, operated in parallel with the pastoral efforts of the "progressive" Catholic Church.[5] Researcher Xóchitl Leyva Solano found that although at times the religious and political promoters cooperated, more often they conflicted over differing goals, and that, at the end of the 1970s in the Lacandon "...the indians expelled the *norteños*" (*Proceso*, #901, Feb 7/94:22).

Throughout the 1980s and 90s especially, international human rights organizations regularly reported unlawful arrest, detention and torture of Mexicans who opposed the government and its party by grassroots organizing.[6] During the negotiations in the spring of 1993 over side-agreements to NAFTA (environmental and labor), Canadian human rights activists attempted and failed to have human rights issues included on this agenda. Roger Clark of Amnesty International told NAFTA hearings in Canada at that time:

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[4] The Zapatista movement may owe its strength nationally partly to these connections between urban protagonists with a background of going to the countryside and the solidarity and understanding that this promotes. Frank Bardacke feels that Subcomandante Marcos certainly promotes this kind of "fusion" between the Mexican left and rural movements: "The essence of Marcos' voice and politics is his deft combination of traditions of indigenous resistance with the cosmopolitan (and somewhat left) culture of contemporary Mexico City. This particular fusion of the traditional and the contemporary (Marcos is, among other things, a translator between the two) helped build powerful support for the EZLN throughout Mexico" (Ross & Bardacke,eds.,1995:256).

[5] Bishop Samuel Ruiz García assumed the position of head of the diocese of San Cristóbal in 1960. Over 35 years he created a structure in rural Chiapas of lay pastors (deacons, sub-deacons and catechists), trained in the methodology of liberation theology. José Ignacio González Faus, Spanish, Jesuit professor of theology in Barcelona notes, "His diocese is a model of organization of indigenous as pastoral agents: it has about 300 deacons, 4,000 male and 300 female catequists, and 200 sub-deacons that are coordinated with traditional indigenous authorities called "*principales*". Don Samuel (a name commonly used for the Bishop) speaks four of the major languages of the region" (*Proceso*, #901, Feb 7/94, Mexico D.F.).

[6] See Human rights reports especially of the Fray Bartolomé Human Rights Centre of San Cristóbal de las Casas e.g. "Acontecer En Chiapas:Resumen de la Prensa Chiapaneca-September 1986 to December 1987", March 1988; "Boletín del Centro de Derechos Humanos, 'Fray Bartolomé de las Casas'", #1, March 1989; "Horizontes, #2, November 1990; Horizontes, #7, September 1992; "En la Ausencia de Justicia, Informe Semestral", Julio a Diciembre de 1993.

> That torture is routinely practised in Mexico may come as a shock still to many Canadians, but that is the reality. The evidence is irrefutable. The only conclusion from our report (Torture with Impunity) is that the Mexican government has failed, and continues to fail, in its own stated commitment to international standards. It has failed to observe its own laws and its own constitutional guarantees and it has failed to create the political will necessary to prevent the atrocious events and practices which Amnesty International has set out in its report. (*Toronto Star*, March 5/93:A15)

Over the last ten years, courageous Mexicans organized independent human rights groups in almost every state of the country to monitor and report on this situation. In 1990 for instance, 20 human rights groups attended an annual national meeting while by 1995, 140 were present (*The Other Side of Mexico*, #41, July-Aug 1994:7). Similarly, indigenous and non-indigenous rural people formed thousands of independent peasant and civic groups and organizations in defence of their rights and lives.

As recently as the 1990s, sympathetic lawyers, journalists and political activists nonetheless, were murdered with impunity by "unknown" assassins. In 1993, the *Toronto Star* reported, "Since Salinas took power [Mexico's president from 1988 to 1994], 26 journalists have been killed" and "16,205 cases of violations and repression..." were reported to Mexican human rights organizations over the same period (*Toronto Star*, March 5,1993:A15).

NEW ZAPATISMO IN FORMATION!

However, other key events and government actions occurring from the 1970s onwards such as--the 1982 debt crisis after the oil boom, structural adjustment, and the allegedly fraudulent presidential election of 1988 fueled demands for a new relationship between the State and the rural sector of civil society. Similarly, the drop in the world price for coffee, the negative effects of government agricultural policies of the 1970s respecting *ejido* reform and the related crisis in food self-sufficiency impelled rural protest. Finally, the influence of technocrats in government policy making, the emergence of new forms of government promoted agrarian organizations and representation, and the growth of government agencies in the country-side as a consequence of government rural development policy--also fed *campesino* (peasant) opposition and organizing. Subsequent chapters will elaborate on these factors.

The following quotation, illustrates with irony the indigenous sense of marginality, and their rejection of the paternalism characteristic of their relationship with the government. At the same time it highlights the importance of the indigenous quest for a "dignified" outcome to their demands for justice, liberty and democracy:

> ....What kind of citizens are the indigenous people of Chiapas? "Citizens in formation"? According to the federal government, do the indigenous people of Chiapas continue to be children, that is to say "adults in formation"?....They want to make us out as intransigents, while placing more and more obstacles in the way of a mutually respectful dialogue. They are preparing to move us from a "political force in formation" to a "political-military force in the process of annihilation". (Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos responds to a government offer of amnesty, *El Tiempo*, January 31/94, Chiapas)

The growth of current indigenous/*campesino* opposition as a movement, is rooted then, nationally, in other social movements of the 1960s as well as the failure of federal government agrarian policy to coopt its rural constituency; while in Chiapas, its antecedent is the intense struggles of the 70s and 80s to form independent peasant organizations capable of autonomous socio-political action and self-defence. A significant, mature, and widespread rural civilian movement which had national linkages thus, slowly emerged over 20 years. It was already active in Chiapas when the armed movement of the Zapatistas burst onto the scene in 1994.

THE BIRTH OF THE NEW ZAPATISTAS

The EZLN, according to Subcomandante Marcos, had its inception in 1983 when six young urban radicals entered the Lacandon Jungle with the intention of preparing for a revolution along traditional Marxist lines.[7] For a long period they kept to themselves and lived deep in the

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7 Lynn Stephen notes: "They viewed themselves as organic intellectuals in the revolutionary vanguard who would educate others" (Stephen, 1996:176). In Marcos' writings since the Rebellion he takes pains to point out that the movement should not be regarded as a revolutionary vanguard nor should he be considered its leader. This is one of his explanations for the wearing of masks so that no one member becomes identified as a leader. It is also why he bears the title of sub-commander. He also emphasizes that their organizational and decision-making style is based on inclusion and consensus with the community bases the ultimate authority.

jungle in isolation from the inhabited areas, learning how to live off the land and adapt to their new environment. Little by little they came in contact with the people and a small nucleus of indigenous became interested in their "project".

In what Marcos calls the second stage in their development as a movement, the small group was drawn into the communities because of the family and political ties of the few indigenous who had by then, joined them. Their gradual integration occurred also because of the communities' need for a defensive force that could respond to the increasingly harsh conditions of repression under state governors Jorge de la Vega Domínguez (1976-78), Salomón González Blanco (1978-80), Juan Sabines Gutíerrez (1980-82) Absalon Castellanos Domínguez (1982-88) and Patrocinio González Garrido (1988-93).[8] These governors responding to peasant mobilizations of the 1970s and the advent of the growth of peasant organizing outside the official government controlled Confederación Nacional Campesino-National Campesino Confederation (CNC)[9] led a bloody campaign documented in the human rights reports of the Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Centre for Human Rights in Chiapas.

The Zapatista's first major task became the organization of a defensive force within the communities. At this point Marcos claims the EZLN was no more than 12 to 15 members, a body that was still external to the communities and under a vertical structure of politico-military command. However, he points out that sometime in 1990-91 their structure,

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8 The previous decade characterized by Thomas Benjamin as "bloody populism" was also repressive. Echeverría's government initiated a populist program of agrarian reform, and the state of Chiapas was the recipient of U.N. development aid. Nevertheless: "During the 1970s a powerful and unorganized agrarian struggle erupted in Chiapas, forcing *campesinos* to take over private property to feed their families, seize control of local governments to break the link between landowners and public power, and stage demonstrations and marches to publicize their terrible problems" (1989:230). These actions were unorganized and spontaneous and happened in isolated localities. He states thus, "state and federal authorities were able to employ the most brutal kind of repression to preserve peace and order and protect private property "(1989:230). During the Castellanos regime, researcher Juan Gonzáles Esponda reported, that there were 153 political assassinations, 692 jailings with a political motive, 503 kidnappings and tortures, and 327 disappearances of *campesinos* (*Proceso*, #900, Jan 31/94:p.41, Mexico D.F.).

9 The CNC is the official organization of peasants and farm workers affiliated with the PRI. This organization was founded in 1938 in the sexenio of Lázaro Cárdenas. The following chapter deals in more detail with the corporatist structures of the Mexican political system.

and the collective, "horizontal" decision-making of the communities clashed as they grew closer and integrated themselves more with the civilian population. Eventually, the time came where he says ironically, "the EZLN met its first defeat". By this Marcos meant that the fledgling army had to submit itself to the authority of the communities.

In this third stage, which Marcos describes as the "massification" of the army, he claims the community began to look at the EZLN as "our army" and it became a branch of the community under its authority. From that point, major decisions were taken by asking "permission" from the community. Within a matter of months, Marcos confirms, thousands of youth joined them and went to the mountains for training. By 1992, hundreds of indigenous villages voted to change their defensive strategy to an offensive one, voting to go to war.

Marcos claims this ultimate decision followed "the logic of death"; that is, the decision to go to war was not a matter of life or death, but a question of a dignified or an undignified death. He emphasizes how significant the 1992 commemoration of "500 years of resistance" or the Columbus Quincentennial was in raising the indigenous consciousness and pride in their past struggles against domination. This contributed to a belief that they could recover their past and begin to make history again (*Marcos: Palabra y Historia*, video, (1995): Marca Diablo, Mexico).

Government repression typically, grew in proportion to the challenge of grassroots organizing, but during this period, so did insurgent consciousness. On one level it was the product of what Neil Harvey calls "a serious erosion of corporatist ties between state and society which had underpinned Mexican stability since the 1930s" (1993:4),[10] but on another level, the cultural, spiritual and social motivators are undeniable:

> ...we who are mountain, we of the nocturnal path, without voice in the palaces, strangers in our own land; we of eternal death, we who have been cast out of history,

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10 Corporatist ties refers to the integration of the CNC into the state-party institutionalizing the channels through which peasant demands were represented. This coopted the peasant movements of the 20s and 30s and linked them corporately to the PRI beginning in 1938. This corporate structure however has been slowly eroded by the withdrawal of government from intervention in the economy in response to the global restructuring of capital requiring the State to adopt the current neoliberal agenda of economic reform.

> without country and without a tomorrow, we of tender fury, of the unveiled truth; we of the long night of insult, the true men and women...the smallest...the most dignified...the always last...the best...We must open the door to our brother's heart again so that it can receive our word. (Communiqué of the CCRI-CG-EZLN, *La Jornada*, April 10, 1994, Chiapas)

Currently, both civilian and armed opposition in Chiapas face a heavily militarized region (estimates in 1996 from 30 to 60,000 federal troops). Furthermore, militarization now extends into other southern states; Guerrero, Oaxaca, Tabasco, and Veracruz. The military now formally act in concert with state and federal police, and sometimes paramilitary groups known as *guardias blancas* (white guards).[11]

OPENING A POLITICAL SPACE: la coyuntura[12]

The EZLN affirms the necessity to bear arms based on their claim that otherwise "the bad government" will not listen to "the people". It is also supposed that the international focus on Mexican political change and human rights abuse would be significantly less without the threat of violent confrontation posed by the EZLN. In fact, their discourse poignantly and metaphorically reiterates the historical theme of a people, forgotten, faceless, and voiceless; the symbol of a politically and economically excluded and exploited group:

> Our war cries opened the deaf ears of the almighty government and its accomplices. Before, for years and years, our voice of dignified peace could not come down from the

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11 The *Guardias Blancas* are commonly referred to as the hired guns or *pistoleros* of ranchers and large landowners. Historically, the government helped form these "police forces" in the governorship of Efrain Arana Osorio (1952-58) as protection against cattle stealing. They were generally *campesinos*, hired and paid for by the ranchers. They were considered auxiliary police by the state government (Cuerpo de Policía Auxiliar Ganadera). These bodies are frequently involved today in cooperation with state and federal police and sometimes the military, in the eviction of *campesinos* from occupied lands. They are also used to threaten and intimidate political opponents of the PRI (unpublished report by the Chiapas NGO coalition, CONPAZ, 1995).
With respect to a unified police and military force, it was announced by a military authority in February 1996 that 18 Bases Operativas Mixtas (BOM-Mixed Operation Bases) have been created in Chiapas to combat drug and illegal arms running, and also, to unblock roads from protesters, evict land occupations, and protestors who take over public buildings. The special force in charge of this has been named "*Fuerza y Reacción*". (*Expreso Chiapas*, Feb.11, 1996: Tuxtla Gutiérrez, p.1)

12 *Coyuntura* is a popular word among political analysts in Mexico. It means the conjuncture or moment when events and actions come together.

> mountains; the governments built tall strong walls to hide themselves from our death and our misery. Our strength had to break down those walls in order to enter our history again, the history they had snatched away from us along with the dignity and reason of our peoples. (Communiqué, CCRI-CG of EZLN, *El Tiempo*, Feb 14/94, Chiapas)

Thus, the indigenous people of Chiapas, by resorting to armed conflict, claim to have opened a political space where their voices are now heard. Furthermore, they invite civil society into this space as an interlocutor with themselves and the state-party in the search for an inclusive political process aimed at reviving constitutional principles of social justice and respect for human rights. The political and armed presence of the EZLN moreover, provides a new bag of strategies and tactics for older social organizations that extends and amplifies the historical resistance of the indigenous.

For example, by the middle of January 1994 more than 270 Chiapan *campesino* and indigenous organizations, including the PRI affiliated National Confederation of Campesinos (CNC), constituted themselves into the State Council of Indigenous and Campesino Organizations of Chiapas (Consejo Estatal de Organizaciones Indígenas y Campesinas - CEOIC). This unity amongst indigenous/*campesino* organizations was unprecedented in Chiapan history. The council declared itself in support of the demands of the EZLN and began to present briefs to the state governor and the various federal government commissions constituted in the wake of the Rebellion, reiterating the insurgents' demands. They also counselled authorities attempting to set up an early dialogue with the insurgents. CEOIC, almost since the Rebellion began, continues to be a key participant in the dialogue between sectors of civil society, and between the State and civil society, and is a major actor in building new political structures in Chiapas:

> In the midst of this long journey from sorrow to hope, the political struggle sees itself naked from the rusty armor of pain, it is the hope which obliges it to seek new forms of struggle, that is to say, new forms of being political, of making politics. A new kind of politics, a new political morale, a new political ethic is not only a desire, it is the only possibility to advance, to jump to the other side. ("Mexico the Long Voyage From Sorrow to Hope", essay by Subcomandante Marcos, September, 1994, p.17: distributed on the Internet by the National Commission for Democracy in Mexico, Texas.)

The Mayan Indian insurgents in Chiapas thus, initially sought to capture the political imagination of a diverse audience and later, move people to action using a discourse which

varies wildly in style, subject matter, form, and content. Their writings include formal declarations of principles and demands, military directives, diplomatic maneuvers, expressions of solidarity with other groups, open letters to Mexican citizens including children, stories (often allegorical) and poems, and of course, political polemics.

Frank Bardacke, in the afterward of a compilation of the EZLN writings, claims that Marcos writes in the literary/political tradition of Tom Paine and Ricardo Flores Magón.[13] Most of Marcos' writing is done in the middle of conflict; the purpose as Bardacke points out is "to inspire, mobilize, amuse, touch, anger" (Bardacke & Ross, 1995:255). He calls him "a master pamphleteer" but warns:

> A complete theory of politics-even to the extent that one is possible or desirable-is not going to come from letters and communiqués that primarily are meant to inspire. Marcos is not that interested in having an intellectually consistent and complete answer to everything..... Marcos is looking for words that will bring him supporters and recruits. Any reconstruction of his thought into a formal theory is at war with his original intention. (1995:255)

During the first month of the Rebellion, the eloquence, and ability of the EZLN to capture media attention created a public response, and the pressure that limited further violent confrontations, and promoted dialogue with the government. Marcos humbly admits that his words only say what the average Mexican wishes to say to government but lacks the opportunity or capacity to do (*Marcos: Palabra y Historia*, Subcomandante Marcos, (1995): D.R. Productions, Marca Diablo, Mexico). Journalist John Ross asserts:

> While the socialist models and their armed, revolutionary expressions were crashing all around them, Marcos and his band survived and grew, borrowing a little from here and there but ultimately just staying tuned to their own people. The objective conditions, the fall of the coffee prices, the revision of Article 27,[14] kicked in in good time. The

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13 Flores Magón was an early 20th century Mexican dissident and revolutionary writer.

14 Neil Harvey reports that reforms to Article 27 were first proposed in November 1991 and adopted two months later, then in February 1992, a new Agrarian Law was passed establishing a new regulatory framework for the "social sector" e.g. *ejidos, comunidades agrarias*. This measure was a key element of neoliberal reform in the 1990s designed to attract private investment in agriculture thereby increasing productivity and welfare according to its proponents. The modifications allow *ejidatarios* to purchase, sell, rent and use as collateral individual and communal lands; private companies are allowed to purchase land according to legal limits; it furthermore, allows associations between capitalists and *ejidatarios* in joint ventures; finally, the revision deleted the clause allowing peasants to petition for land redistribution (Harvey, 1994:25).

coyuntura locked and the miracle was made manifest. Then these words began. (Bardacke & Ross, 1995:15)

Consequently, despite its position of extreme isolation in the Lacandon, surrounded by tens of thousands of Mexican soldiers, the armed indigenous movement sometimes leads, and contributes to, the framing of a national public debate about political transformation and democratic development. This then, is the strategic position the EZLN strives to promote and maintain-an arena or political space where the institutionalized forms of mediation and representation e.g. corporatism, patron-client relationships, can be contested, renegotiated and it is hoped, transformed by Mexican civil society:

> We reiterate that both our political and economic demands are now in effect, and we will try to unite all the Mexican people and their independent organizations around them so that, through varied forms of struggle, a national revolutionary movement will be born with a place for all kinds of social organizations whose honest and patriotic goal is a better Mexico. ("Here we are, the forever dead...", Communiqué from CCRI-CG of EZLN, *La Jornada*, Jan 6/94, Mexico)

"PARA NOSOTROS, NADA! PARA TODOS, TODO!"[15]*: the Ethical Agenda*

The EZLN aims to achieve substantive transformation in the material and social lives of the indigenous and poor people of Chiapas and Mexico, but prefaces those changes on fundamental national, and radical political change occurring first. Poverty according to the doctrines of the new *Zapatismo,* has other dimensions than the economic:

> The serious poverty that we share with our fellow citizens has a common cause: the lack of liberty and democracy. We think that authentic respect for the liberties and democratic will of the people are the indispensable prerequisites for the improvement of the economic and social conditions of the dispossessed of our country. For this reason, at the same time that we unfurl the banner of improving the material conditions of the people of Mexico, we demand liberty and democracy by calling for the resignation of the illegitimate government of Carlos Salinas de Gortari and the formation of a government of democratic transition, which would guarantee fair elections at all levels of government throughout the country. ("Here we are the forever dead...", Communiqué of the CCRI-CG of the EZLN, *El Tiempo*, Jan 6/94, Chiapas)

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15 "For ourselves, nothing! For everyone, everything!"

There have been four declarations to date and all begin with historical contexts to the indigenous struggle. In the first declaration the EZLN speak of a colonized and oppressed people; a country historically dominated by foreign ideology. Today's Mexico is portrayed as deeply dependent on foreign powers and lacking democratic institutions. Thus, the Zapatistas using "historical reason", challenge current global and modernizing trends that increasingly diminish not only national sovereignty, but also regional and local control over socio-cultural and economic production and reproduction; a democratic form of development. It is therefore, a discourse about autonomous development and local/regional decision-making.

Additionally, this indigenous army demands respect for pluralism and diversity, denouncing institutionalized racial discrimination and human rights abuse, limited representation and political accountability. It is thus an ethical discourse on dignity and equality and the democratization of development.

Tactically, EZLN discourse is a call to attack these problems collectively and inclusively, hence, one of their best known aphorisms, "For ourselves, nothing! For everybody, everything!" ("*Para nosotros, nada! Para todos, todo*!"):

> For all the indigenous peoples, for all the *campesinos*, for all the workers, for all the teachers and students, for all the children, for all the elderly, for all the women, for all the men, everything for everyone: liberty, justice, democracy. For us, the smallest people of these lands, those without face and without history, those armed with truth and fire, those of us who come from the night and the mountain, the true men and women, the dead of yesterday, today and forever...for ourselves nothing. For everyone, everything. (Communiqué of the CCRI-CG of the EZLN, *La Jornada*, Feb 16/94, Mexico)

A DEATH SENTENCE TO INDIGENOUS CULTURE: Neoliberal Restructuring

Symbolically, the first day of the uprising coincided with the official entrance of Mexico into free-trade with Canada and the United States through the NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement). The final agreement was negotiated by the three countries in virtual secrecy and approved by the legislatures with a minimum of public debate or input. This procedure epitomizes the EZLN critique of conventional electoral democracy and the prevailing

development process. NAFTA symbolizes the extremely unequal process of modernization that has fuelled peasant resistance at least since the time of Porfirio Díaz.[16] Their discourse moreover, has a powerful international implication in its condemnation of a highly significant 20th century economic "development" initiative: global liberalization of trade.

The impact of NAFTA, the EZLN argue, has already been felt negatively in the Mexican countryside by poor *campesinos* whose main crop is the staple, corn. More importantly, Harvey claims, is the effect on *campesino* expectations that *ejido* reform has produced (1994:3). Constitutional changes to Article 27, preparatory to Mexico's entrance into NAFTA, will prejudice the communal form of land tenure won as a result of the 1910 Mexican Revolution leading towards the sale and privatization of communal lands.[17] Thus, to the *campesino*/indigenous population, NAFTA spells the end of land reform and possibly, a way of life. The EZLN spokesperson, Subcomandante Marcos, declares from the balcony of the captured Municipal Palace in San Cristóbal de las Casas, 1 January 1994:

> This [the war] is our response to the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement, because this represents a death sentence for all of the Indigenous ethnicities of Mexico, which are disposable for the Government of Carlos Salinas de Gortari. (reported by Roberto Carbajal, San Cristóbal de las Casas, Jan 1/94, published in *Zapatistas!: Documents of a New Revolution*, (1994), Autonomedia, New York: p.71)

DIALOGUE FOR PEACE: A National Debate?

The overriding tactic used by the insurgents to promote their cause has been dialogue with both their adversaries and sympathizers. Once they came to prominence through armed

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16 June Nash, who has done research in Chiapas since 1957, in a piece co-authored with Kathleen Sullivan, states, "Just as '*Porfirismo*'(1876-1910) aimed to help Mexico's elites by protecting them from control by the church, state, or communities, so the PRI, ..envisions a 'liberalized economy' freed from restraint. This policy threatens indigenous peoples in *ejidos*.....". Nash and Sullivan typify the last three Mexican regimes as leading towards a "Return to Porfirismo", the title of their 1992 article. (Nash & Sullivan, 1992:13-16).

17 Harvey asserts that NAFTA gives small producers an even more marginal role in the economy creating a "new rural underclass" composed of young people with no land and few job prospects. This means not only, increased rural-urban and international migration but also "the political organization of rural movements seeking to defend small farmers and redefine their insertion into the market on more advantageous terms" or the ultimate response, rebellion (Harvey, 1994:4).

conflict, the Zapatistas began creating and/or responding to opportunities for open discussion, debate and negotiation. The first formal dialogue between the EZLN and the Mexican government was instituted hastily in February 1994 by the government to quell national opposition from civil society to a military solution to the Rebellion. The protest was especially vehement, after the airforce bombings of the Chiapan countryside on the fourth and fifth days of the war. By February 21, a delegation of 19 Zapatistas including Subcomandante Marcos, returned to San Cristóbal de las Casas to begin 10 days of talks sponsored by the Salinas government.

The weather was bitterly cold and the town had a ghost-like atmosphere. The main plaza was cordoned off to the citizenry deadening the level of activity in the town's hub. In fact, the commercial and part of the professional sector of the city were not in agreement with the process of "pacification" or the site of the dialogue the government had chosen. They were already suffering from an economic down-turn the Rebellion had provoked. Most of the economic and social elite, the self proclaimed "authentic *coletos*"[18] favored a hard-line military solution to the conflict, openly accusing the Bishop and the Church under his authority, of fomenting the war.[19] Perhaps cautiously but certainly with stoicism, in a spirit of peace and non-violence, other sectors of civil society more sympathetic to indigenous demands, quickly became actors in the dialogue.[20]

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18 "*Coletos*" is the nickname given to inhabitants of San Cristóbal during the colonial period because of the pigtails that were fashionable for men. Today conservative businessmen and professionals of San Cristóbal who purport to trace their family history to the colony call themselves the authentic *coletos*. This is just one remnant of the discriminatory and hierarchial social system that prejudiced the indigenous and the rural poor of Chiapas for the last 504 years.

19 This sector of "*San Cristobalenses*" (inhabitants of San Cristóbal held a large meeting the week after the Dialogue and issued an extremely vitriolic statement calling amongst other things for the withdrawal of the Bishop from office, the closure of the regional newspaper *El Tiempo*, the prohibition of the sale of the national newspaper, *La Jornada* in San Cristóbal and an increase in military presence. They also vandalized and asked for the closure of the only book store that sold the paper at this time. They formed a group called the Frente Civico Chiapaneco (the Chiapan Civic Front), and some of its members went around and sealed the doors of San Cristóbal's 20 odd churches with a flyer that asked citizens not to attend church until the Bishop was removed. The Bishop received death threats during this week, one tied to a rock thrown through a window of the cathedral. These violent and extremely hostile actions brought many denunciations from formerly supportive citizens who had been in attendance at the meeting (*El Tiempo*, March 9 to 12/94, San Cristóbal de las Casas).

20 This group is composed of progressive intellectuals and professionals, students, the grassroots organizations

Three "*cinturones*" (belts or rings) of people surrounded the newly named "Cathedral of Peace", the meeting place, throughout the whole dialogue. Each *cinturón* extended around eight square blocks, totally enclosing the plaza, Municipal palace and the Bishop's cathedral; one of these human circles was composed of unarmed military police, the second, red cross volunteers, and the last, "civil society". Night and day on four hour shifts, the "*cinturón de paz*" (belt of peace) provided security for the insurgent participants to dialogue with the high-level, government negotiator, Manuel Camacho Solís[21], and the mediator and host, "Don Samuel". The Bishop is well-known for his social justice and consciousness raising work amongst the indigenous of Chiapas, and for this his appointment as mediator was not well received by the conservative elements of Chiapan society.[22]

The unarmed presence of civil society, protecting the still armed EZLN delegates inside the cathedral, created a powerful symbol of peaceful civilian involvement in solidarity with the Zapatista cause. Furthermore, the federal military presence similarly unarmed, intensified the aura of peace and conciliation. This was a time of high drama and tension, which has been characteristic of day-to-day life in Chiapas since the Rebellion occurred.

Mexican non-governmental organizations (NGOs), some who came from across the country, played a fundamental role as participants, organizers and coordinators of aspects of the dialogue particularly the *cinturón*.[23] In Chiapas there is a well developed and

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ctd.20 ... of the Church, a middle class newly established in the area from other parts of Mexico, the democratic current of the teachers' unions, NGOs and other left-leaning social and political organizations like women's groups and most opposition political parties.

21 Camacho Solís was named the Commisioner for Peace by Salinas on January 11, 1994 and charged with setting up a negotiation process with the EZLN. At the time, Camacho was one of Mexico's most powerful politicians and at one time, a potential candidate for president in the 1994 elections. He held several posts in the Salinas government, Secretary of External Relations and head of the Department of the Federal District which controls the administration of Mexico City.

22 The Bishop has received numerous death threats and was frequently blamed for the uprising by Chiapas elites. Also, attempts were orchestrated by conservative elements in the Catholic Church nationally allied with political and economic elites in Chiapas, to remove him from the diocese in 1993 and again, in 1994.

23 These organizations will be examined in more detail in Chapter 5 as a particular form of mediating organization within civil society.

long-standing network between NGOs, the Church, some local government agencies and independent peasant organizations. NGOs tend also to have strong linkages with international organizations and human rights groups, some of which, have facilitated the development and growth of peasant movements. The EZLN acknowledges the important part the NGO sector plays in the movement and points to them as models of social organization and action:

> We have decided to entrust our lives and liberties-our arrival and departure routes as well as the lodging accommodations during the dialogue-to the Non Governmental Organizations, because we have seen in them the future to which we aspire: a future in which civil society, with its force for true justice, makes not only wars but armies unnecessary; and a future in which governments, whatever their political tendency, work under the constant and strict vigilance of a free and democratic civil society. (Communiqué, CCRI-CG of EZLN, Feb 20/94, *El Tiempo, Chiapas*)

Additionally, more than 600 media representatives attended this spectacle of peace and dialogue. The Zapatistas, particularly their spokesperson, Subcomandante Marcos, took full advantage of the press as a captive and generally, sympathetic audience. Regularly scheduled press conferences and interviews, (sometimes twice a day), broadcasts on the radio and television, (via two large portable satellite dishes anachronistically parked beside the 400 year old cathedral), extended the dialogue to the nation and the world. The media provided the public relations opportunity and the EZLN expertly exploited it to expand its own dialogue with civil society.

The drama of the uprising was re-enacted by Marcos at the opening of the dialogue, in what one observer described as a "revitalization of a new form of nationalism" (Steele, 1994:2). Marcos theatrically unfurled a Mexican flag he claimed was captured when the city was taken by them on 1 January 1994, handing one corner of the flag to a surprised peace commissioner Camacho Solís sitting beside him. The picture of the high-level politician and the masked rebel holding up a "stolen" Mexican flag appeared on the front pages of major newspapers the next day reinforcing the insurgent group's moral authority.

Steele's acute analysis of this action and Marcos' opening speech at the talks, is that the Zapatistas "reappropriated and resemanticized" Mexican nationalism "around the symbol of a

pluralistic army of the poor" (1994:2). Marcos' poetic speech contained this patriotic theme linked to peace:

> When we came down from the mountains, carrying our packs, our dead and our history, we came to the city to look for our native land (patria). The homeland that had forgotten us in the last corner of the country, the most isolated corner, the poorest, the dirtiest, the worst. We came to ask the homeland, our native land, Why have you left us here for so many years? Why have you left us here with so many dead? And we want to ask you again, Why is it necessary to kill and to die in order for you to listen to Ramona [one of the EZLN delegates]...You have told us that we have been given a chance for peace and we came here with a true and honest spirit. If there is another path to the same place, a place where this flag-the national flag-flies with democracy, liberty and justice, show us. Don't play with our blood. If it is possible to raise this flag, our flag, your flag, with dignity, without the necessity of the death that fertilizes the soil in which it is planted, it will be. (Opening speech of the Dialogue for Peace by Marcos, Feb 22/94, San Cristóbal de las Casas: *Proceso*, #904, 1994)

"No nos dejen solos!" ("Don't leave us alone!") was the front-page headline on March 3 when the Zapatists slipped out of San Cristóbal at dawn (*Tabasco Hoy*, March 3/94, Tabasco). It symbolized the plea from the EZLN to civil society to take up the struggle that they had begun. In the previous day's press conference Marcos discussed the possibility of a peaceful and negotiated transition to democracy as the outcome he favored. He then expressed his belief that civil society was the only vehicle for achieving that goal through electoral reform:

> When we came here, we bet everything, even our lives, on civil society. If we are wrong then we're screwed. We hope they don't leave us alone. We believed that the people would unify themselves to demand the resignation of Salinas, but it looks like maybe this was too much [to expect]. Anyway, the point is that the people say to the government: instead of anarchy, better to modify the electoral law. (*Expreso Chiapas*, March 2/1994, #85, Tuxtla Gutiérrez)

THE SECOND DECLARATION OF THE LACANDON

In June 1994, the EZLN finally rejected the government's "peace" proposal and simultaneously, issued its second declaration. The rejection was the result of a lengthy consultation process with its power base in the indigenous communities of the jungle and the Chiapan Highlands; an example of direct democracy that the Zapatistas often point to as a

model. Hundreds of village assemblies voted on the proposal and turned it down because, informed the General Command, fundamentally, it lacked recognition of the national and political dimensions of their demands:

> The government attempted in vain to reduce the importance of our struggle to the concerns of the local indigenous community, and even to those of the four municipalities of southeastern Chiapas. (Communiqué of CCRI-CG of the EZLN, *El Tiempo*, June 10/94, Chiapas)

Specifically, the Zapatistas reiterated their demands for; free and democratic elections, resignation of President Salinas, and the institution of a transitional government, revision of NAFTA, indigenous autonomy at the local and regional levels, dignified jobs and fair wages, an end to plunder of national resources by the few, solution to the national problem of hunger, cancellation of rural debt, and freedom for all political prisoners and poor people unjustly detained.

In other words, EZLN discourse once more expresses the necessity for broad inclusionary political action, linked to an opening of the political system; a new way of doing politics. Hence, the Second Declaration affirms the power of civil society and issues a constitutional challenge. The discourse once again, adopts the rhetoric of "revitalized nationalism" by quoting an article of the 1917 Constitution:

> ....Article 39 of the Political Constitution of the United States of Mexico: "National sovereignty resides, essentially and originally, in the people. All public power emanates from the people and is constituted for the benefit of the same. The people have, at all times, the inalienable right to alter or modify the form of their government." ... But this nightmare only lasted twelve days, as another force, superior to any political or military power, imposed itself on the conflicting sides. Civil society assumed the duty of preserving our country; it demonstrated its disagreement with the massacre and forced a dialogue. (Second Declaration of the Lacandon, CCRI-CG of EZLN, *El Tiempo*, June/94, Chiapas)

THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION: Aguascalientes Reborn

The National Democratic Convention, 8 to 10 August 1994, was a unique gathering and a cornerstone of Zapatista strategy in the mobilization of civil society for a transition to

democracy. It is yet another example of the symbolic ground the Zapatistas are so apt at preparing. The Zapatisas put it simply to civil society in a speech to participants of the Caravan of Caravans in June 1994.[24] The rebels said they needed their help in deciding what to do next:

> This is the idea of the Convention; lets sit together, the civilians that want one thing and the soldiers [Zapatistas] that want the same thing. And lets come to an agreement, instead of sitting and waiting for the other to see what happens. One betting that arms will get what they need and the other betting that the mobilizations will get what is needed. This is how the idea of the Convention was born and with this spirit we called it. (Speech to the Caravan of Caravans, Subcomandante Marcos, Somewhere in the Lacandon Jungle, June 14, 1994: *Proceso*, #927, Aug 8/94)

A meeting place was created outside of Guadelupe Tepeyac, *municipio* of Las Margaritas, especially for this event and baptized Aguascalientes.[25] The site in the jungle was operationalized in less than two months even though approximately 6,000 people throughout the country needed to be invited, an amphitheatre in the jungle had to be constructed, and lodgings and other basic amenities needed to be established in an area that didn't even have electricity or paved roads for a hundred miles. Furthermore, the EZLN themselves were under siege by the Mexican army. The principal themes were a peaceful transition to democracy and a new constitution.

Aguascalientes, symbol of the new *Zapatismo*, rose out of the jungle through the labor of hundreds of Mayan Indians, many of whom walked days to contribute their share of the work. The convention strategically took place a week and a half before the national presidential election on August 21 which brought Ernesto Zedillo to power.

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24 Throughout the winter of 1994 civil society in Mexico responded to the needs of 20,000 people who had fled their homes in the conflict zone to take up refuge in the nearest urban areas. They collected and transported tons of food and clothing in what they called caravans. many accompanied the caravans as a show of solidarity with the EZLN and as human rights observers.

25 Aguascalientes was the meeting place where preliminary constitutional discussions took place during the Revolution in 1914. The peasant revolutionary forces of Villa and Zapata won concessions from contentious political forces that finally recognized parts of the Plan de Ayala which was the Zapatista blueprint for agrarian reform. The army destroyed the new Aguascalientes in February 1995 but the Zapatistas constructed four more in different places within Chiapas between November and December 1995 to celebrate the second anniversary of their uprising.

The stage was set in the jungle, with Mexican notables and social activists of the left and centre seated on a huge, outdoor podium draped with two gigantic Mexican flags. A solemn march past of the EZLN regulars and militia, men, women and children, opened the plenary of the convention. They had white ribbons, a symbol of peace, tied to their guns. Delegates had spent the previous three days in discussion groups in San Cristóbal attempting to hash out the broad outlines of a policy and a program for a transition to democracy. Sectarian wrangling and disagreements within the left made this a stormy three days and some felt not much was accomplished. The two main objectives, to come to some national agreement on proposals for a new constitution and a structure for a government of transition to democracy, were a long way from being achieved.

The outcome nevertheless, left delegates and the country with a sense of optimism about the strength of popular movements' potential to mobilize peacefully against the state-party system, and the EZLN's commitment to search for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. The CND (Convención Nacional Democrático-National Democratic Convention) established itself as a permanent body with a collective leadership which in the following six months convened two more meetings concentrating on the mobilization of a National Liberation Movement, intent on uniting broad-based social organizations throughout the country. One of the important EZLN declarations at the convention was their peace pledge; not to go to war again without the permission of civil society or assume the role of the revolutionary vanguard:

> We have rejected all possibility of participating in the presidency of the CND because the search for peace cannot be presided over by an armed force. They have said that the Zapatistas have placed a condition that if things do not turn out the way they want on the 21 of August the war will start again. They are lying to the Mexican people. No one, not even the EZLN can give conditions or ultimatums to civil society. For the EZLN there are no conditions except those that the peaceful and civil mobilizations determine. To those, we subordinate ourselves including our disappearance as an alternative. The war will not come from us [the EZLN]. (Speech by Subcomandante Marcos at the CND, Aug 8, 1994: *Proceso*, Aug. 15/94, Mexico D.F.)

Despite the divisiveness of the ideological wrangles of the left who predominated at the conference; an on-going dispute over political and non-political affiliation of the movement; the defeat of the centre-left coalition's (Partido Revolucionario Democrático-Party of the

Democratic Revolution (PRD)) in the presidential election of August 1994 by the PRI; and increasing government repression and co-optation - the mobilization of civil society continued to broaden and deepen in response to the moral leadership and symbolism of the EZLN. Popular mobilizations were further intensified in 1995 and 1996 by the economic crisis and peso crash in December of 1994. Additionally, on February 9, 1995 the new President, Ernesto Zedillo ordered the arrest, and subsequent man-hunt for alleged Zapatista leaders and this led to massive protest and demonstrations in the following weeks particularly in Mexico City.

CONSTRUCTING A NATIONAL MOVEMENT:

Continuing the Dialogue with Civil Society

A process of dialogue between the EZLN and civil society has been almost continuous since the conflict started. Interestingly, Marcos admits that it was not until February 1994 that the EZLN realized the key role civil society might play in achieving their goals. So the EZLN decided with this realization to reorient their strategy based on the perceived power of the politically non-aligned e.g. civil society. (*Marcos: Palabra y Historia*, video, (1995): Marca Diablo, Mexico) Thus, in addition to their voluminous epistles, it was not long before they became pro-active in creating face to face encounters with civil society.

The first and probably most highly visible example was the National Democratic Convention in August 1994. Throughout the first year after the Rebellion, meetings with a broad cross-section of civil society were continual. This direct and frequent contact with civil society was severely curbed after February 1995 military incursion into Zapatista controlled territory. On February 9, President Ernesto Zedillo, newly installed just two months earlier, issued arrest warrants for people alleged to be leaders of the EZLN including Marcos. This move was based on evidence of weapons, documents and testimony put forward by the government as proof of a widespread plot to overthrow the government. The federal police were put in charge of rounding up various "subversives" mostly in central Mexico, but in Chiapas the army and the federal police collaborated to launch a massive incursion into the

Lacandon jungle, breaking the cease-fire line, and establishing what has become a permanent military presence in territory formally controlled by the Zapatista army. The rebels fled deeper into the jungle and so did many of the people of the communities that were its base of support. According to the government's opponents and human rights observers, this was the beginning of a low intensity war of threats, intimidation, destruction of property and illegal detention in Chiapas. Civil society throughout Mexico responded massively again through huge demonstrations protesting this action.

Nevertheless, the EZLN sponsored a national and international referendum in the summer of 1995, convened a national indigenous forum in February 1996, and in November-December 1995, constructed four inter-cultural meeting places in rural Chiapas to promote exchange of opinions between the indigenous and rest of civil society. They named these centres "the new Aquascalientes" in honor of the CND meeting place now destroyed by the army; yet another symbol of their continuing resistance and more importantly, the involvement of civil society. These became centres for the celebration of the second anniversary of the uprising in 1995/96; all this, in conjunction with continued meetings with individual media people, NGO representatives, ordinary citizens participating in Caravans of humanitarian aid and solidarity; and finally, foreign and Mexican human rights observers, and various others acting in solidarity with the EZLN.

Still the Zapatistas continued to court civil society. By the spring of 1996, the first of two international conferences on the effects of neo-liberalism was convened in a tiny village in the Lacandon ironically named La Realidad (Reality). It drew hundreds of participants from all over the Americas. They billed this meeting as the American Preparatory Meeting for the July-August 1996, Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism. Hence although the Zapatistas have become ever more isolated from their sympathizers, their international linkages, facilitated by the power of electronic communications (e.g. the Internet), allow them to extend the debate about neoliberalism and democratic transformation to the world. In July 1996 thousands responded internationally and joined the Zapatistas in a one

week forum of international civil society whose initial small group discussions were held at the "new Aguascalientes" and the plenary in La Realidad.

The opportunities for direct contact, and the responsiveness of a broad based constituency open to the message of the new *Zapatismo*, are astonishing given the rebels' isolation and who they represent culturally and socio-economically. One of the 900 delegates to the April 1996 European Preparatory Meeting in Germany expressed this amazement- "Who would have thought the biggest challenge to NAFTA would have come from the most marginalised of Indians in the heart of the Mexican jungle" (*Guardian Weekly*, June 16/96)? Unquestionably, the new *Zapatismo* strikes a chord of resistance that has resonated with persistence, depth, and breadth. It is a testimony to the success of the Zapatista war of words, the existence of moral authority, and the power of their symbols to mobilize civil society.

The Chiapas conflict is thus becoming an experimental ground for theories of civil society and social change. The process is often chaotic, at times anarchic, but definitively dynamic when examined from the perspective of the numbers and kinds of social organizing that are taking place including the global extension of the struggle. The organizational responses of civil society will be examined in more depth in Chapter 5.

THE THIRD DECLARATION: a Government of Transition

When the first anniversary of the uprising arrived in January 1995 the image of "modern" Mexico including the government's aspiration to "First World" status was in tatters. Mexicans found themselves in yet another debt crisis, and two unresolved assassinations of major political leaders pointed to the decomposition of the ruling party. Not only were parts of rural Mexico openly in rebellion, but the middle and working classes now began mobilizing in the wake of severe economic and political crises (Ross, 1995:785).[26]

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26 John Ross writes in December 1995 that the Federal District Registry reported "roughly eight protest marches a day" in Mexico City. This is almost two years after the Chiapas uprising (1995:785).

The struggle of the civilian pro-democracy movements in Chiapas picked up steam when the organizational framework of a government of transition was put into place immediately after the inaugurations in December 1994 of the newly elected President, Ernesto Zedillo, and PRI Governor of Chiapas, Robledo Rincón. The second-run candidate, Amado Avendano Figueroa who ran as the representative of civil society, on the same day, became the titular head of a parallel government in rebellion which set up offices in San Cristóbal.

Meanwhile, civil disobedience, in protest over alleged fraud and manipulation in the state elections, intensified with daily land take-overs, blocking of major roads, take-overs of town halls and radio stations and the forceful removal in some cases of local PRI presidents of rural county governments. Marches, demonstrations and sit-ins were frequent occurrences in urban centres. CEOIC declared five regions autonomous indigenous areas ("Chiapas Rebels Threaten Chaos", *Globe and Mail*, Toronto, Dec 6/94). Avendano claimed to be supported by between 34 and 58 of the state's *municipios* out of a total of 111.

In mid December, an unknown number of Zapatistas slipped through army lines and peacefully took up positions in several northern towns, the highlands and areas bordering on Guatemala. *Campesino* sympathizers put up road blocks for several days preventing vehicles from entering autonomous regions. Within 24 hours the rebels disappeared, effectively demonstrating their broad support in a large portion of rural Chiapas outside the Lancandon jungle (García de Léon, *La Jornada*, Dec 20/94). In this explosive climate a newly formed mediation commission CONAI (Comisión Nacional de Intermediación-National Commission for Intermediation), headed by the Bishop, was desperately trying to bring the government and the rebels back to the negotiation table. The Zapatistas issued the Third Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle calling for the formation of a National Liberation Movement while condemning the 1994 election process as fraudulent:

> Knowing that elections are not, in the current conditions, the road to democratic change, the EZLN accepted being put to one side in order to give legal political opposition forces the opportunity to struggle. The EZLN pledged its work and its effort, then, to seeking a peaceful transition to democracy. In the National Democratic Convention the EZLN sought a civic and peaceful force. One which, without opposing the electoral process, would also not be consumed by it, and that would seek new forms

> of struggle which would include more democratic sectors in Mexico as well as linking itself with democratic movements in other parts of the world. August 21 ended the illusions of an immediate change through peaceful means. An electoral process that is corrupt immoral, unfair and illegitimate culminated in a new mockery of the good will of the citizens. The party-state system reaffirmed its antidemocratic vocation and imposed, in all parts and at all levels, its arrogance. (The Third Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle, *El Tiempo*, Jan 2/95, Chiapas)

The discourse reconfirms their stance that non-party political forms of struggle are essential if the radical transformation they envision is to come about. Hence, they proposed a grand coalition of social organizations into a National Liberation Movement (Movimiento Nacional de Liberación-MLN) and at this juncture, the CND, and in contradiction, one of the leading opposition candidates Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas of the PRD, were called on as the social forces to mobilize this movement. This mixed message apparently caused divisive reactions in social organizations later in the year that rebounded at the regional level amongst grassroots groups in Chiapas splitting local movements between those who favored alliances with the PRD and those who chose to be politically non-aligned.

In this declaration the EZLN also shows the first sign of impatience with civil society and mildly rebukes "the cynicism and laziness" that has "returned to take possession of the sentiments of the Nation." while further on, it criticizes those who are being coopted by government hand-outs:

> We called attention especially to those who supposedly had received government help, and yet continue living in the misery that they inherited...(Third Declaration of the Lacandon, *El Tiempo*, Jan /95, Chiapas)

Finally, the declaration clearly emphasizes the recognition of regional indigenous autonomy as one of the structural remedies to their exclusion from the political process. It is one of the five tasks the EZLN sets out for transitional governments. The others are the "liquidation of the system of Party-State..; the reform of the electoral laws..; the convening of a constituent assembly to create a new constitution.." and; "the re-orientation of the national economic program" (Third Declaration, 1995). However, the EZLN vision of a non-party political structure as the force behind political transformation dogs the attempts of the movement to construct a unified force for social change.

THE EZLN NATIONAL REFERENDUM: la Consulta (the consultation)

The Fourth Declaration, 1 January 1996, responds to a referendum known as la consulta. The EZLN initiated a national and international plebiscite in the summer of 1995 still with the hope that moderate and progressive forces could unite under the banner of Zapatismo.

Hence, the EZLN, again calls on civil society to dialogue with it; to let it know what it should do next. The rebels, attempt innovatively to reawaken civil society to a new democracy where civic involvement is fundamental.

Moreover, the plebiscite becomes a strategic maneuver made in the midst of an alleged "low intensity war" in the Chiapas countryside, and months of difficult, humiliating, and almost impossible, government-EZLN negotiations over renewal of the peace process. A plebiscite by a clandestine and armed group isolated in the jungle "confronts the challenge of a lack of resources, and the establishment of working relationships among disparate groups" (Report by Cecilia Rodriguez, Director, National Commission for Democracy in Mexico, July 24/95, Texas). Nevertheless, one million, three hundred thousand citizens responded nationally and internationally to six questions:

> 1) Are you in agreement with the principal demands of the people of Mexico - LAND, HOUSING, WORK, FOOD, HEALTH, INFORMATION, INDEPENDENCE, DEMOCRACY, LIBERTY, JUSTICE, PEACE, SECURITY, COMBATING CORRUPTION, DEFENCE OF THE ENVIRONMENT?
>
> 2) Should the distinct forces of democratization unite in a BROAD CIVILIAN FRONT FOR SOCIAL AND POLITICAL OPPOSITION and fight for these 16 demands?
>
> 3) Should Mexicans make a PROFOUND POLITICAL REFORM that guarantees democracy?
>
> 4) Should the EZLN CONVERT ITSELF INTO A POLITICAL FORCE, INDEPENDENT AND NEW without uniting with other political organizations?
>
> 5) Should THE EZLN UNITE WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND TOGETHER FORM A NEW POLITICAL ORGANIZATION?
>
> 6) Should we guarantee THE PRESENCE AND EQUAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN ALL POSTS OF REPRESENTATION AND RESPONSABILITY IN

CIVIL ORGANIZATIONS AND THE GOVERNMENT? (Referendum Document, 30 July 1995, Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas)

The EZLN once again, shows its willingness and eagerness to dialogue with civil society and pedagogically gives a lesson on direct democracy:

> To learn to listen is, at least for the indigenous people of Southeastern Mexico, to learn to live. Now we want to make use of these rights and responsibilities, the right to speak and to be heard, and the responsibility to listen to the words of others. They say that this is a "dialogue": to speak and to listen...to find what makes us different, but also, and this is the most difficult, what makes us the same. The old wise man Antonio taught us that questions help us to move forward...Antonio demonstrated that by asking and responding one moves forward and arrives....at another question and another response. Now we are following this path, we are asking....and we are waiting for responses. (Communiqué, Subcomandante Marcos, EZLN, *El Tiempo*, June 20/95, Chiapas)

References in EZLN discourse to the ideas and words of elders, exemplified in Marcos' mythical character "old man Antonio", illustrate the "historical reason" (*Marcos: Historia y Palabra*, video, (1995): D.R. Productions, Marca Diablo, Mexico) consistently applied by *Zapatismo* to indigenous demands for justice, liberty and democracy. Along with "revitalized nationalism", this is one of the important sources of Zapatista moral authority. This sense of historical reason creates a strong nexus between current indigenous demands and the national revolutionary mythology; an important element in the cultural heritage of the Mexican nation; an integral quality of "*México profundo*".

THE FOURTH DECLARATION: "Mandar Obediciendo"[27]

Four months after successfully promoting the *consulta*, the EZLN issued the Fourth Declaration responding to the results. Once more the Zapatistas attempt to mobilize a national political movement by calling for the organization of civil society into a national front called the Zapatista National Liberation Front (Frente Zapatista de Liberación Nacional-FZLN). The FZLN is conceived as:

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27 The aphorism *mandar obediciendo* which means to command by obeying, is one of the most quoted by pro-democracy forces. It is meant to oppose the idea of top-down, hierarchial authority in governance and give the authority for the political legitimation to organized civil society.

> ...a civil and peaceful organization, independent [of government and political parties] and democratic, Mexican and national, that struggles for democracy, liberty and justice in Mexico...as a political force whose participants don't hold or aspire to hold elected positions or government posts at any level. A political force that does not aspire to take power. A force that is not a political party. (Fourth Declaration of the Lacandon, *La Jornada*, Jan 1/96, Mexico)

At this point, the dialogue with the government had resumed after arduous months of debate over the armies' tactical positions, procedural rules and the agenda. Nationally, social organizing continued apace in 1995, responding to the alleged illegal arrests in February 1995 of supposed EZLN leaders, a massacre of peasants in Guerrero, June 1995, the murder of a prominent judge in Mexico City, a transport workers labor dispute in Mexico City and the general rise in worker and middle class protest over worsening economic conditions represented by a large movement called El Barzón.[28]

Mariclaire Acosta, President of the Mexican Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights in Mexico City describes Mexico as now "facing the worst political crisis since 1928" (*The Other Side of Mexico*, no.41, July/Aug. 1995, Mexico: p.9). She confirms the mediating role civil society is playing however:

> The presence of a more organized society with clear demands has kept the country from sinking further into chaos...Even though there is an enormous sector of the population that doesn't have a lot of experience in politics-because they have minimal access to information and they are living under survival conditions-there is a sector of society that is politicized and organized. (Interview in *The Other Side of Mexico*, no.41, July/Aug 1995, Mexico, p.9)

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28 The debtors movement, El Barzón, claiming a half a million membership, has grown "geometrically" and nationally since the peso crash in December 1994 and subsequent austerity measures in 1995. In a 1996 interview one of the leadership, Alfonso Ramrez Cueller says that it was founded by northern farmers and ranchers when the NAFTA came into effect but really took off when the new economic crisis began. Middle class and urban debtors, the people with credit cards, and small businessmen and transport owners with bank loans joined the movement denouncing the supposed benefits of neoliberal reform and the government's response to the new debt crisis. Ramrez Cueller says this expansion has led the movement now to also question the effects of neoliberal restructuring on jobs and the country's productive capacity and the privileged position of bankers and other financial elites. He and the urban leader, Enrique Puebla were arrested in December 1995 on trumped up charges then released within a week (Interview by Blanche Petrich, *La Jornada*, Jan 31/96, Mexico D.F.). *Barzón* is the leather strap that connects the yoke to the oxen.

The Fourth Declaration is the rebel's reply to the overwhelmingly positive response received to the *consulta's* fourth and fifth questions; Should the EZLN convert itself into a new political and independent force? Should the EZLN unite with other forces and organizations and form a new political organization?

These questions and the EZLN's subsequent response however, create confusion and it is claimed, outright contradiction, especially, among the Mexican political left. In general, the sectarian reaction was; How can an organization be political and not struggle for power (*Proceso*, #1002, Jan 15/96, p.30, Mexico D.F.)? The Zapatista's reiteration of the non-political party nature of their newly proposed front, certainly appeared problematic within the conventional concept of how politics is done but not so according to one of the main tenets of *Zapatismo: mandar obediciendo*:

> The faceless men kept talking: "The world is another world where the reason and will of true men does not govern any longer; we are few and forgotten, death and scorn walk with us, we are small, our word is ignored. Silence has lived with us in our houses for a long time, but now the time has come for our hearts and the hearts of others to speak. Our dead will come forth, out of the night and out of the earth, and those without faces, those that are mountain will come forth, and they shall all dress for war so that their voice will be heard, ...Look for men and women who command by obeying [*mandar obediciendo*], those whose strength is in words and not in fire, and when you find them, talk to them and give them the staff of command...."(Communiqué of the CCRI-CG the EZLN, *El Tiempo*, Feb 26/94, Chiapas)

Subcomandante Marcos, in an interview after his appearance at the National Indigenous Forum in San Cristóbal held 3 to 7 January 1996, was dismayed at the lack of understanding of one of *Zapatismo's* basic principles: the pre-eminent position of organized civil society in the new political vision. Political accountability to organized structures within civil society is a concept that is continuously woven into EZLN discourse. Marcos responds to the skeptics about a new way of doing politics:

> They have harshly criticized the EZLN for not attempting to take power...and we don't understand why. They told us it isn't possible to struggle for democracy if we don't attempt to take power, as if it were possible that if one criticizes a bureaucrat who is doing bad work or a police-person who is corrupt, means that one has to become a bureaucrat or a police-person for things to work well. What we want is to organize the society to resolve these problems that the government is not resolving. (Interview of Marcos Jan 9/96, *Proceso*, #1002, Jan 15/96, p.30, Mexico D.F.)

On the other hand, the creation of the FZLN was widely hailed as a clear sign, and the first step, towards the "legalization" of the Zapatista movement and the eventual disappearance of the EZLN as a clandestine military force. To those in Chiapas desperate for a peaceful and dignified resolution to the conflict and government repression, it is a hopeful sign. Some on the left even conceded that this move "would serve to strengthen the forces of the left" (Heberto Castillo, interview in *Proceso*, #1001, Jan 8/96, Mexico D.F., p.7), who failed both within the CND, and then in the 1994 election, to form a united opposition in order to defeat the state-party. For this, they had been openly criticized by the EZLN on a number of occasions.

Another recent EZLN innovation, Committees of Civilian Dialogue (Comités Civiles de Díalogo), is one of the vehicles for incorporating the bulk of politically non-aligned civil society into the new front. These are conceived of by the EZLN as grassroots groups focusing on individual participation, whose task is to discuss local issues and propose collective solutions. The emphasis and objective thus, is on a structure for dialogue from below which can be fed into a transformed political structure. The formation of the FZLN from this broad and non-partisan base provides an alternative for individuals in civil society not formally connected to other types of social or political organizations. It also allows a more extensive base to directly organize at the community level and participate in the peaceful struggle for a constituent assembly, a new constitution, and a government of transition to democracy.

Meanwhile in the fall of 1995 and the winter of 1996, the seeds of a National Liberation Movement were beginning to grow. A broad front of national social organizations including independent labor unions, opposition party members, NGOs, campesino organizations, and grassroots movements including El Barzón are formally discussing its formation. In a February 1996 meeting almost 300 organizations participated (Interview with Onecimo Hidalgo Dominguéz of CONPAZ, San Cristóbal, Feb 9/96). A provisional committee has had meetings with Marcos in the Lacandon and the EZLN has suggested the FZLN will participate in this structure. According to one of the organizers, Benito Mirón, "The CND modified the shape of the left and has made very important contributions to unity and organization. The CND was a

great school where we learned respect for diversity" (Interview in *Proceso*, #1002, Jan 15/96, Mexico D.F., p.31).

There is no doubt that Mexico is in political and social turmoil in 1996. The dynamism of social organizing makes it impossible to determine particular outcomes. The shifting forces of solidarity within and between the political sphere and civil society threaten unity in dissenting sectors, but it is obvious that *Zapatismo* has awakened civil society to the possibility of an alternative to the present regime and possibly to a new political culture. What that will be, how that will be achieved, and at what cost is far from clear. Unquestionably, the EZLN war of words and ideas has played a powerful role in spearheading the social and cultural change that is now occurring. Furthermore, its discourse is rooted in an indigenous cultural heritage that Mexico is not finding easy to escape from in its bid to be recognized as a "first world" nation.

The heart then of Zapatista democratic discourse is the vision that political transformation will be achieved by the myriad actions of Mexican, and possibly, international civil society. The EZLN envisions an overall project of political autonomy through popular mobilization and participation at all levels of Mexican society so that politics can once and for all, be stripped from the state-party thereby creating a political space for changing the existing undemocratic structures. This will be achieved through mobilizations at the grassroots involving a plurality of individuals, groups and organizations that desire and support democratic change:

> Our form of struggle is not the only one; for many it may not even be an acceptable one. Other forms of struggle exist and have great value. ..... The Zapatista Army of National Liberation has never claimed that its form of struggle is the only legitimate one. It's just the only one we were left. The EZLN salutes the honest and necessary development of all forms of struggle that will lead us to liberty, democracy and justice....The struggle for liberty, democracy and justice is not only the task of the EZLN, it's the task of all Mexicans and all honest, independent and progressive organizations. Each one on its own ground, each one with its own form of struggle, each one with its own organization and ideas. (Communiqué of the CCRI-CG of EZLN, *El Tiempo*, Jan 20/94, Chiapas)

CHAPTER 2

MEXICAN POLITICAL CULTURE AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

"The Mexican political system is not democratic-let's not kid ourselves. It is a unique system that has no equivalents in the world, that has managed to keep a party in power by adapting to circumstances with a versatility that no other authoritarian system has managed." (Mario Vargas Llosa, quoted in *Proceso*, no.723, September 10, 1990)

Huge cracks have appeared in the social cement that Mexico's particular political culture has provided for more than 65 years. The hegemony of the PRI and its political structure, built to maintain itself in power, is seriously being challenged by a broad spectrum of Mexican society. The extent and strength of social movements in Mexico attest to the increasing lack of legitimacy faced by the Mexican state in the 1990s.

This chapter will try to show that the phenomenon of the emergence and empowerment of a social category as broad-based as civil society is explained not only through the examination of an intricate web of formations, structures and systems, but also of factors pertinent to particular subject positions and collective identities.

Therefore, along with emphasis on the political and social structures of Mexican society other avenues of analysis opened by theorists of "new" social movements are reviewed that may offer a more complete explanation of social change and organizing. New frameworks distinguish and differentiate particular social struggles and the subjects that participate in them. These new paradigms give an investigation into the potential for social change an anthropological or people-centred turn.

Specifically, post-structuralist methodological and theoretical approaches constitute an alternative way of analyzing economic, political and social phenomena. The "western" bias and assumptions of former paradigms, e.g. economistic and class based paradigms, can be "corrected" using a framework where culture becomes a key analytical category. Escobar

emphasizes the importance of such a theoretical approach for the survival of so-called Third World "subjectivities" (1995:225):

> The greatest political promise of minority cultures is their potential for resisting and subverting the axiomatics of capitalism and modernity in their hegemonic form. This is why cultural difference is one of the key political facts of our times. Because cultural difference is also at the root of postdevelopment, this makes the reconceptualization of what is happening in and to the Third World a key task at present. The unmaking of the Third World-as a challenge to the Western historical mode to which the entire globe seems to be captive-is in the balance. (1995:225)

THE PERFECT DICTATORSHIP[1]

In 1995 Mexico's Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) holds the record for the longest ruling political party in the world. It has used a discourse of revolutionary reform to sanction its mandate and to maintain legitimacy among its base for support. This includes the estimated half of the Mexican population considered to be living in poverty.[2]

Electorally, the PRI has never faced significant opposition until very recently. Moreover, it has also been successful in projecting a national image of social stability and democracy to the world by using national myths and symbols of power derived from the party's revolutionary heritage.

The Mexican political system has been described as highly centralized and interventionist, attempting to be the arbiter of both economic growth and social equity (Grindle,1981;

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[1] Mario Vargas Llosa coined the term "the perfect dictatorship". By this Cothran claims he meant "...a system of veiled authoritarianism that perpetuated a party in power, rather than a person, allowing some criticism as long as it did not fundamentally threaten the system. However, the regime was willing to use all means, "including the worst" to suppress criticism that might threaten its rule. Thus Mexican political stability has been made possible in part because of one-party rule [the state-party]."(Cothran, 1994:1) This characteristic of the Mexican political system hence gives rise to the terminology "state-party" or "*partido-estatal*" used frequently by Mexican political analysts.

[2] Minimum real wages fell by 66 percent between 1980-1990; according to the government's own statistics, more than half of Mexico's total population fell below the official poverty line by 1987; more than 20% were living in what the government defines as "extreme poverty". "As the lost decade of the 1980s ended, some ten million Mexicans were suffering from what the government calls "critical" nutritional deficiencies" (Cornelius & Craig, 1991:108).

Sanderson, 1981). According to Grindle: "so extensive is the role of government in the daily life of its citizens and so pervasive its economic presence, that Mexico can be characterized as a patrimonial state" (Grindle, 1981:4).

However, over the last two *sexenios* (two presidential terms, twelve years) this interventionist role has been altered significantly in response to global economic trends and the severe economic crises the country faced in the 1980s. Restructuring, privatization and cuts to social programs have greatly reduced its role as an "activist state" (Cornelius & Craig, 1991; Grindle, 1981) and Mexico's entrance into the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Canada and the U.S., has further weakened government's traditional control over the national economy.

Nevertheless, the political structures that centralize power in Mexico have remained virtually intact and the political culture that accommodates this system has also been slow to change. Meanwhile, numerous sectors of Mexican society, most dramatically the indigenous of Chiapas, express their sense of abandonment and insecurity, by mobilizing around the pro-democracy and anti-neoliberal reform discourse of the numerous forces currently in opposition to the state-party, the PRI.

It would seem more accurate, in the 1990s, with neoliberal transformation of the Mexican economy well on its way, to emphasize the authoritarian aspects of the Mexican system. Evelyn Stevens elaborates such a system. This system is identified by limited pluralism (in contrast to liberal democracies), an ambiguous ideology (no organized system of political thought but rather a mentality or frame of mind) that in this thesis is considered to be "a political culture", limited mobilization (government organized groups only occasionally allowed to act), and an elitist distrust of popular preferences. Stevens also contends that, "..instead of total repression it [the State] depends for its effectiveness on systematic discouragement of popular participation" (Stevens, 1979:411). Yet while the formal system prevents direct participation, there is an informal structure of mediated participation through patron-client relationships and co-optation.

These characteristics indicate a high degree of dependence on some other individual or group to get results on the behalf of a petitioner. Patronage and influence then, are an integral part of Mexican political culture and signal a greatly weakened civil society (Castañeda, 1994; Grindle, 1981; Sanderson, 1981). Civil society thus, can rarely make demands directly to decision-makers in the form of political participation. Sporadic protest, sometimes violence erupts; then government response to actions or movements such as peasant land invasions, indigenous protest marches, civic protests groups, unauthorized labor, student and doctors' strikes is frequently, authoritarian and repressive (Stevens, 1979:414).

Jorge Castañeda explains that the sectors of civil society which appeared in Europe and North America to form representative bodies, failed to emerge in Latin America because "the state emerged before the nation was truly constituted as such", leading to an extremely powerful state relative to civil society (Castañeda, 1994:183).

The current political instability in Mexico has been punctuated by a number of assassinations of high level political and judicial figures in 1994/95.[3] Also significant, has been the continuous violent attacks on members of official political opposition parties such as the Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD). Human rights monitors report a consistently high level of human and civil rights violations recorded throughout the last two presidential terms. Furthermore, the internal fracturing of the PRI, between pro-reformist factions and the so-called hard-line "dinosaurs" of the party, is additional evidence of the pressure for change within the regime.

The creation of an open and accessible political system based on the recognition and exercise of citizenship with respect for the principles of representation, has obviously yet to be achieved in Mexico. The model described above suggests that civil society has never had direct

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[3] In the spring of 1994, the PRI candidate for president, Luis Donaldo Colosio was assassinated while campaigning. In 1995 José Francisco Ruiz Massieu, the Secretary General of the PRI was assassinated getting into a car in Mexico City. In the same year Judge Polo Uscanga was murdered in his office in Mexico City. It is popularly believed that fractions of the PRI itself were involved in the assassination of its own candidate. This belief has been reinforce by the inability of the police and legal structure to adequately solve these three high profile murders and some evidence that cover-ups have been attempted by important political figures.

access within the present political system. The attitudes, beliefs and behaviors inherent to the social fabric of Mexican political life, support and reinforce an authoritarian political structure. Perhaps paradoxically, this system has until recently, maintained relative social peace and a form of political stability for more than 65 years that is unique in Latin America.

The EZLN is representative of one sector of civil society that has managed in the 1990s, to pry open a political space in the authoritarian landscape of Mexican political culture. Their actions and their discourse have placed the historic populist and corporatist underpinnings of this system, and the extensive power of the presidency and the state-party, under open attack. Furthermore, this movement is successfully reappropriating its populist and nationalist revolutionary discourse that has hitherto legitimized the state-party system at least since the Cárdenas era (1934-40). In so doing, these new Zapatistas are strategically capitalizing on a crisis of legitimacy that is driving so much of the social unrest in Mexico and Chiapas today.

This has animated the search for new forms of representation, changing the nature of relations between the State and civil society (Harvey in Foweraker & Craig, 1990:183). Harvey asserts that, "The impact of these movements on the political system has been to render ineffective the continued use of clientelistic and corporatist forms of representation." (Harvey:183).

POPULISM

Populism describes a unique relationship between state and civil society and is considered by some analysts to be Latin America's alternative to a democratic culture (Rea, Ducatenzeiler & Faucher:1992). Populism as an alternative is seen to function in the following way:

> Faced with resistance and opposition that impede the introduction of profound and necessary institutional reforms, populism is seen as a way of overcoming the resistance of some while satisfying the demands of the rest. The attraction of populism is that of short-term consensus obtained through an ambivalent discourse of change and conciliation without the cumbersome responsibilities of representation. (1992:125)

According to Sanderson, Mexican populism has its historical roots in the weak class structure of post-revolutionary Mexican society, and the need to destroy the traditional land owning oligarchy (the *latifundistas*). One of the goals of the early Mexican state was to try to build a middle class through the development of commercial agriculture and the promotion of industrialization. This producer class then, would become the dominant class and the party's political base.

Before this consolidation of power could take place though, the regime's survival was at stake. The institutionalization of the authoritarian model of government took place out of the conflict of revolutionary groups after 1917. Moreover, struggling with the same problem, the previous dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz (1876-1910), had left a legacy which Sanderson claims, "...haunted Mexico's post-revolutionary search for political identity" (Sanderson,1981:206). During his regime, "The state, not the market, became the symbol of order" (1981:206). It was conceded that the State would have a problem maintaining political legitimacy because of its weak class structure (1981:207).

Populism as a political instrument thus explains some of the anti-bourgeois elements of the Mexican political system e.g. agrarian reform, particularly the *ejido* land tenure system. Sanderson`s theory of Mexican populism asserts that:

> ...the Mexican state can (as it does in reality) conflict with its own reason for existence, in the short run; it can oppose its need to maintain authority as a capitalist promoter.... with its need to fulfill the revolutionary promises of social obligation (through land redistribution and political rhetoric against the bourgeoisie).... (1981:203)

It is this contradiction that has cost current regimes in Mexico dearly with respect to legitimacy. Neoliberal reform in support of the transition to free market economies and global free trade has finally destroyed the populist pact[4] with the underclasses especially in Mexican rural society. This has resulted in a feeling amongst the rural poor of abandonment and

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[4] Sanderson's characterization of the populist pact is: "To guarantee the social peace needed for capitalist accumulation, the state had to appear to benefit the *campesinos* materially. By challenging *caciques* (local political bosses) and by employing a vague *agrarista* (agricultural reformist) tone, the state promised to dispense political power through its institutions on behalf of the masses" (Sanderson, 1981:209).

desperation as agricultural producer prices fall, subsidies and credits are withdrawn, land reform is foreclosed, and *campesinos* are driven from their traditional lands and way of life. It has contributed to the rise of social movements in Mexico and the 1994 Rebellion in Chiapas.

CORPORATISM AND CLIENTISM

Corporatism and clientism are closely associated with populist governments and the lack of a democratic culture. Corporatism arose in Mexico where interest groups had little autonomy because of the prohibitions against forming independent representative organizations. In Mexico where civil authority is weak, the political leadership, as a means of social control, coopts the major social groups into the political structure thereby making the government and the official party the only point of reference for social actors (Castañeda, 1994:198; Rea et al, 1992:129).

Under President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-40), a reorganization of the official revolutionary party, (the Partido Nacional Revolucionario-PNR, founded 1929 and renamed the PRI in 1946), instituted populist corporatism. Cárdenas created a centralized sectoral structure composed of four groupings of citizens to replace the previous regional party organizational principle: peasant, labor, popular (government employees) and military. The latter was later abolished and absorbed into the popular sector. The remaining three sectors, the National Campesino Confederation (CNC), Confederation of Mexican Workers (Confederación de Trabajores de México-CTM), and the National Confederation of Popular Organizations (Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Populares-CNOP, later changed to Federación Nacional de Organizaciones y Ciudadanos-FNOC), became the major components of the present day PRI (Barry, 1992:7).

This structural creation virtually guaranteed the State's political control over civil society. Sanderson asserts that:

> Working-class organizations and *campesino* groups smothered under the weight of subsequent state domination. Class leadership itself became bureaucratized in the administrative advance of the state." (1981:218)

The history of peasant organizing in Chiapas, particularly the period from the 1970s to the present illustrates the increasing tensions between the state-party and independent representative organizations of rural civil society (Benjamin, 1989; Harvey, 1994).

The corporate entities described above, became the party's mechanism for the mobilization of electoral support, the channels through which patronage and influence are mediated, and also a way to de-mobilize popular movements of dissent. Each sector is structured vertically with city, state, and national offices. In reality, policy is determined at the national headquarters by the party hierarchy and the three sectors do not interact except at the highest level in the National Executive Committee of the party.

Clientism in Mexican political culture has been typologized as a:

> ...necessary survival instinct in a society characterized by extreme inequalities. It has played a functional role in the corporatist structure to such an extent that the two systems coexist in a mutually supportive symbiotic relationship.(Rea et.al.1992,:130)

Since "populism has been constructed on a corporatist base, incorporating the masses into the political system of state approved organizations," (1992:130) demands on the system take place differently than in a truly pluralist society. Their demands take the form of petitions to individual authorities even the president and are hence personalistic in nature.

The patron/client system consists in a network of relationships of power where various leaders and their clients barter and negotiate for favors at all levels of the political system. The Mexican president is at the apex of these clientist structures and at this level there is a continuous struggle to win influence and create alliances to affect policy issues (Cornelius & Craig, 1991).

At the local level the infamous *cacique* (local power and political broker) has authority over the daily life of rural/indigenous people in the *ejidos* and more traditional Indian communities. The underclasses, particularly those who are not part of the corporate political structure e.g.

landless peasants and indigenous, and workers in the non-formal sector, have little opportunity to influence political or administrative decision-making.

Since the Rebellion in Chiapas, one of the main targets of protest and direct action by civil society has been the allegedly corrupt municipal presidents (heads of counties or *municipios*) and the *caciques* who are themselves usually intimately tied to the traditional land-owning elite. Since the Rebellion many of these officials have been forcibly removed from their offices through acts of civil disobedience by organized groups in Chiapan civil society (Monroy, 1994:20). Additionally, a parallel state government was set up in San Cristóbal de las Casas in December 1994, responding to the inauguration of yet another PRI regime resulting from the allegedly fraudulent elections of August 1994. These multiple acts of resistance are aimed at attacking the entrenched political culture that is characterized by populism, corporatism and clientism.

PRESIDENTIALISMO

Presidentialismo (presidentialism), more than any other characteristic of this political culture, is indicative of anti-democratic values and behaviors, and the lack of representativeness of the Mexican political system. This extreme centralization of power in the presidency has resulted in "an inefficient and corrupt state apparatus" (Cothran, 1994; Garrido, 1989:417).

Garrido emphasizes that "the Mexican president, glorified for nearly half a century as the source of national well-being, is today condemned by many sectors as the origin of all national ills" (1989:417). He maintains that each of the last four presidents preceding Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994), (Díaz Ordaz (1964-70), Echeverría (1970-76), López Portillo (1976-82), and de la Madrid (1982-88)), at the end of their terms, had forfeited credibility and lost their reputations (1989:417).

The same fate befell Salinas de Gortari. Ernesto Zedillo succeeded him, taking office amidst what many Mexican political analysts charged, was the gravest political and economic crisis

Mexico has faced since the Revolution. In fact, the month before Zedillo took power, it was not uncommon to find daily analyses in the press that referred to "revolution", "civil insurrection", and "civil war" as immanent possibilities in Mexico (*La Jornada*, Proceso, November 1994). Similarly, there are widespread accusations that Salinas is to blame for the sudden and catastrophic devaluation of the peso in December 1994 and he is also frequently implicated (including links to the Mexican drug cartel) in the assassinations of two prominent political figures of his own party.

Garrido describes the presidency using the following categories to explain its extraordinary dominance and centralization: constitutional powers, metaconstitutional powers, anticonstitutional powers (1989:421). In the first category he notes that the president's authority was greatly enhanced in the 1917 constitution over those conferred by the reformed 1857 Constitution. The presidential jurisdiction has been continuously enhanced through the years. Garrido claims that the extensive range of presidential powers in the Constitution "distinguishes this government from all others on the continent" (1989:422). His role as supreme head of the "official" party facilitated the amendments over time of the Constitution's principles as did his power to wield almost complete control over Congress.

In his second category, Garrido calls the president's metaconstitutional powers the "unwritten norms of the Mexican system" (1989:422). These constitute important elements of Mexican political culture. These give the president the authority to act as the chief constituent power and legislator, and ultimate authority in electoral matters; to designate his successor to the presidency, state governors, members of the PRI majorities in Congress, and most state representatives and mayors including the power to remove them; to impose his viewpoint on one or both houses of Congress, assume jurisdiction in judicial matters, impose his authority over state governors nullifying Article 40 of the Constitution, and finally, to override local government autonomy as set forth in Article 115 of the Constitution (1989:422-425).

Although these kinds of powers may exist in other so-called liberal democracies they do not reach the level of control and authority that exists in Mexico. It is the close and controlling ties

between the party, the presidency and the legislature that obviously facilitate this concentration of power and result in the aphorism "state-party".

Finally, while Garrido qualifies the former powers to be within the bounds of legality, the anticonstitutional powers "inherent in the Mexican system" are described as functioning to "cloak questionable actions in the guise of legality. One party rule in Mexico often allows for an almost systematic violation of the legal order" (1989:426). These powers include, the freedom to violate the legal code and immunity from prosecution (1989:426).

A further dimension of this system of authority is the administrative/bureaucratic structure that goes hand in hand with *presidentialismo*. Castañeda points out that with each political change "everybody came and went" in the Mexican civil services:

> Repression, populism, governmental precariousness and turbulence made the very idea of a permanent, apolitical well-paid and competent civil service, with rights, duties, hierarchies, and promotion ladders almost unthinkable." (Castañeda, 1994:387)

The quality of the public service has been seriously undermined by the nature of the patron/client relationships of bureaucrats to politicians, and the resultant "dearth of administrative capacity, of trained and adequately remunerated personnel, honesty and efficiency" (1994:386).

Nowhere is this more evident than in the rural areas, for example, in the "provincial" *municipios*, the local administrative centres of Chiapas. Virtually every *campesino* has suffered directly, the indignities, frustrations and injustices that this system perpetuates.[5] Nevertheless, these are the rules under which all the political processes in Mexico function. The system is

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[5] Interviews with rural Chiapans revealed the suffering and loss of time and earnings incurred in dealing with land claims or government handouts. *Campesinos* testified to walking many hours to reach government offices where they sit and wait sometimes days to present papers to officials or collect a cheque. Angry protesters in a road blockade in Bochil in 1994 claimed they were promised a PROCAMPO (Programa de Apoyos Directos al Campo-Program of Direct Support to the Countryside) cheque (federal government subsidies to small farmers) the day before. They ended up waiting two days, and got nothing. They gave up and decided to block the road and collect a few pesos from each motorist to buy some food for the return trip to their *ejido*. Others told of receiving cheques too late to go and cash them requiring them to stay another day. Often *campesinos* have no cash and come to town with only a supply of tortillas and salt to tide them over until they return home. These cheques were handed out in Chiapas during the two weeks before the August 21, 1994 election. The protesters in Bochil said they would not vote if they didn't receive a cheque.

culturally ingrained and inherent, and observers and analysts may witness how it operates daily in the lives of people, often trying only to meet their basic requirements for survival.

Chiapas has a long history of local peasant resistance to agrarian dispossession and political oppression as does much of rural Mexico. The continued denial of electoral democracy and the lack of representation is directly related to the rise of independent peasant organizations in Chiapas from 1970 onwards and spurs the national mobilization of Mexicans in a pro-democracy movement of increasing significance since the 1994 Rebellion and Mexico's current economic crisis.

TOWARDS A NEW THEORY OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

The response to generations of injustice, lack of democracy and representation, and flagrant attacks on the dignity of the poor and indigenous has historically been varied and sporadic. Nevertheless, there has been a marked growth and a progressively sophisticated development in the level of social organizing outside of government sponsored corporate institutions (Castañeda, 1994; Escobar, 1992; Fals Borda, 1992). Chapter 1 documents the current struggle of the Zapatista movement in Chiapas while Chapters 4 and 5 trace the history of rural resistance and social organizing and its current manifestations in the state up to 1996.

The motivational forces that have precipitated many movements vary with the historical conjuncture as these examples from Mexico illustrate: a crisis brought on by disaster, such as the 1985 earthquake in Mexico city; the opportunity for pro-democracy groups and disaffected state-party officials to organize the first significant electoral challenge to the PRI in 1988; and the ultimate response represented by an organized rebellion of indigenous and *campesinos* in Chiapas in 1994.

These are but a few of the movements that have challenged the entrenched political culture over the last decade in Mexico not to mention others equally significant involving students, women, environmental groups and labor. Their advent can be traced back to the 1960s (Castañeda, 1994; Escobar, 1993; Fals Borda, 1992). Particularly crucial in analyzing social

protest and movements in Mexico, are the student protests of the mid 1960s which culminated in the massacre of hundreds in the repressive response of the government of López Portillo in 1968. Their common cause is reflected in attacks on the entrenched political culture and demands for political representation and political accountability.

An important aspect of the contemporary social movements are linkages and networks that are currently observable, particularly the plethora of social movements attempting to address issues of political transformation and human rights. Foucault points out that: "...it is doubtless the strategic codification of points of resistance that makes a revolution possible, somewhat similar to the ways in which the state relies on the institutional integration of power relationships" (Foucault, 1980:95-96 quoted in Escobar, 1984:381). Antonio García de León in an essay on political legitimacy cites Habermas' interesting concept of revolution which may be applied to the direction which social movements are headed in today in Mexico:

> When the solution of crises of legitimation joins the transformation of basic institutions, of not only the state, but also society in general, we refer to this as a revolution. (García de León, 1996:8, in *La Jornada Semenal*, March/96)

A review of the current literature nonetheless, warns that a critical assessment is required in analyzing the role of social movements in the process of change. Factors such as institutional power (treated above), external influence (e.g. global economics and geo-politics), cultural specificities and identity, and of course political violence all need to be carefully considered. Similarly, ethics and justice as Slater puts it, "are now increasingly interwoven with the new research on social movements and the rethinking of political change" (Slater, 1994:7).

This current refocusing and re-evaluation is the result of an increasing number of case studies, field work at the grassroots and growing intellectual exchange between Northern and Southern researchers (Escobar & Alvarez:1992). The conflict in Chiapas presents an exceptional opportunity to advance the theory of social movements in Latin America within an expanded methodological framework.

Fals Borda, a long time grassroots activist and development critic in Latin America, feels the survival of social and popular movements over the last twenty years is "nothing short of

extraordinary" (Fals Borda, 1992:308). He characterizes the early movements as arising locally, out of concrete needs that had to be met for survival. In addition, the early ones typically consisted of actors from the base or periphery of society and were sometimes led by disaffected professionals often academics or bureaucrats (what Gustavo Esteva refers to as "deprofessionalized professionals") whose "institutions were unable to meet the challenges of the times" e.g. extreme poverty and human rights abuse (Esteva, 1987:126; Fals Borda, 1992:304).

These early grassroots groups were commonly, frustrated with past associations with leftist, sectarian vanguards and they were distrustful of traditional politicking. Thus, Fals Borda emphasizes, "Virtually all the early activities of social movements were carried on outside party structures or established organisms."; Chiapas is no exception (Fals Borda:304). Their actions were in the "realm of the micro and the quotidian; they took short careful steps" (1992:304). The Indian scholar and development critic Rajnid Kothari emphasizes the need for new theorizing about what he calls the "non-party political process":

> If we are unable to explain the phenomenon in terms of existing political theory or ideological constructs, the need is to recognize the theoretical lag instead of trying to explain away the phenomenon because it doesn't fit received theory. So much the worse for theory. (Kothari, 1984:222)

The Zapatista discourse clearly echoes this anti-party stance as do many of the other sectoral movements of civil society in Chiapas.[6]

Escobar and Alvarez in conceptualizing Latin American social movements stress the necessity of considering both the "how" and the "why" in the analysis of social movements by bringing into dialogue European and North American attempts to understand them. They are concerned with describing social movements as an "interaction of structure and agency,

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[6] In the run-up to the 1994 election Marcos met with the PRD leader Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas in the Lacandon and he denounced the lack of internal democracy in the PRD. He refused to endorse the party and in his speech stated that, "The only force capable of achieving liberty, democracy and justice and a change in the world as a whole, is the strength of the people, those without a party or an organization, those without a voice or a face. Those who win with the truth will be invincible." (Speech by Marcos in *La Jornada*, May 17/94, p.8)

identity and strategy in shaping the dynamics of collective struggles in L.A. today" (Escobar & Alvarez, 1992:318).

In tracing the growth and evolution of the early 1960s movements Escobar and Alvarez outline the following dynamic ideological, organizational, and institutional conditions that facilitated movement expansion:

> 1. the progressive church's liberation discourse and pastoral activism
>
> 2. the Left's self-criticism and reevaluation of strategies of social change pursued in the 1960s and 1970s
>
> 3. the generation of new interactional networks among urban and rural residents of different social sectors
>
> 4. the massive expansion of the developmentalist state itself and the role of state agents in encouraging their clients to demand social services
>
> 5. the targeting of new groups, particularly women and indigenous peoples by national and international development establishments. (1992:318)

The communiqués and declarations of the EZLN have heightened awareness of these conditions as part of their strategy to mobilize and unify the discontent expressed by Mexicans in general with the political economy. However, there are also important "conjunctural forces and systemic changes" that precipitated the emergence of many of these movements. Among the most important they list are--"the exhaustion of "development", the crisis of the developmentalist/populist state, and the weakening of party systems and populist and corporatist mechanisms of representation" (1992:318).

Resource mobilization theorists emphasize similar structural factors such as the existence of clientism, corporatism, the dominance of state over civil society and again the strength of political parties (1992:318). Overall though, these factors do not complete the picture of how social movements evolve according to Escobar:

> ...the emergence and development of movements also (entails) the production of meanings and the construction of collective identities. Culture mediates the movement from structural conditions to social and political action. (Escobar, 1992:319)

The central role played by cultural mediation is yet another theoretical departure from conventional social movement theorizing.

Slater (1994:12-14), in a review of the literature on social movements deals with yet another dimension; class analysis is an important but deceptive factor. He situates its significance, after critiquing its "failure to theorize subjectivity and identity", in its usefulness as a category in explaining a "point of arrival", while warning about its inutility as a "pregiven point of departure" (1994:14). This caution is elaborated by Scott (1985:43) in his writing on the everyday forms of peasant resistance:

> ...class does not exhaust the total explanatory space of social actions; nowhere is this more true than within the peasant village, where class may compete with kinship, neighborhood, faction, and ritual links as foci of human identity and solidarity; beyond the village level, it may also compete with ethnicity, language group, religion, and region as a focus of loyalty.

Slater furthermore, calls attention to the heterogeneity of collective struggle and the "complex constitution of individual identities" and he questions the assumption of a unified, non-fragmented collective of actors (1994:15). Indeed, this argument emphasizes that the concept of fragmentation is crucial to understanding and describing movements, another useful departure from conventional analysis.

Feminist theory is credited for its contribution to the understanding that "in each individual there are multiple subject positions corresponding both to the different social relations in which the individual participates and to the discourses that constitute these relations" (Mouffe, 1992:372 quoted in Slater, 1994:15). From this point follows the proposition that "the subjectivity of a given social agent can never by finally fixed; it is provisionally and often precariously constituted at the intersection of various discourses" (Slater, 1994:15). This kind of theorizing allows the analysis of social movements to be redirected away from "the rationalist assumption of a self-present and unitary subject" e.g. the proletarian (1994:16) and contextualizes subjectivity as a process which is multi-faceted and fluid.

Foucault's work with respect to discourse analysis and power makes an important contribution to a new theoretical framework. His theories argue that the constitution of subject

positions occurs discursively and the identification of subjects is never final; "...it is always open to challenge and destabilization so that in the case of some social movements for instance, opposition to the sedimentation of established meanings requires the articulation and coalition of different subject positions and political ideas" (1994:16). This is an example of what Foucault refers to as "reverse discourses" (1980:100-101 quoted in Slater, 1994:17). Slater summarizes the implications of this position:

> The emergence of "challenge and destabilization" relates to the idea of "points of resistance" within the network of power. For Foucault there is no single locus of "great refusal", "no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions." "Instead," he writes, "there is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case: resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, or violent; still others that are quick to compromise." Although there may occasionally be "massive binary divisions," "great radical ruptures," more often one is dealing with "mobile and transitory points of resistance, producing cleavages in a society that shift about, fracturing unities and effecting regroupings, furrowing across individuals themselves, cutting them up and remolding them." (Slater, 1994:17)

In Foucault's typology of social action there are three kinds of struggle: against ethnic, social, and religious domination; against exploitation that separated individuals from what they produced; and against submission and subjection (Escobar, 1984:380).

For struggles such as the latter which Foucault saw as becoming increasingly significant, he suggested the following features:

> 1) questioning the status of the individual--on the one hand, "they assert the right to be different" and, on the other, "they attack everything which separates the individual, breaks his links with others, splits up community life, forces the individual back on himself and ties him to his own identity in a constraining way";
>
> 2) opposition to the privileges of knowledge, to secrecy and disinformation--calling into question the relation of knowledge to power; and,
>
> 3) rejection of "economic and ideological state violence which ignore who we are individually, and also a refusal of a scientific or administrative inquisition which determines who one is." (Foucault, 1986:211-212, quoted in Slater, 1994:27)

This text from an EZLN communiqué epitomizes the character of their struggle having many of the same parameters that are outlined above by Foucault:

> Before, for years and years, our voice of dignified peace could not come down from the mountains; the governments built tall strong walls to hide themselves from our death and our misery. Our strength had to break down those walls in order to enter our history again, the history they had snatched away from us along with the dignity and reason of our peoples.(Communiqué of the CCRI-CG of the EZLN, *El Tiempo*, Feb 8/1994, Chiapas)

The analysis of social action against a system of subjugation and submission, Slater adds, offers insights into the "reverse discourse" described above. An anti-development discourse for instance, disputes elite control as a particular "congealed" structure of power relations (Slater, 1994:27). A theoretical framework focusing on subjectivity, identity and discourse hence, includes the categories available to explain indigenous and non-political party, peoples' movements like the EZLN in Mexico. It puts a much needed emphasis on movement identity and cultural mediation which often exhibit oppositional cultural and spiritual values, beliefs, and practices that can be translated into "reverse discourses". These in turn, can be effectively used to challenge established and dominant cultures. These features of present-day movements illustrate the possibility, "through the power to oppose and struggle", of "unfreezing some of the structures of domination" (1994:29).

The post structuralist theoretical focus on identity, subjectivity and agency in collective action has obviously produced some fruitful theorizing in recent years. Escobar asserts that this has grown out of the theoretical contributions made particularly by feminist analysis (Escobar, 1992:71). For example, Chantal Mouffe considers the key characteristic of contemporary social struggles to be, "..an ensemble of subject positions linked through inscription in social relations, hitherto considered as apolitical..". These she asserts, "have become loci of conflict and antagonism and have led to political mobilizations" (Mouffe, 1992:372). She considers this to be a dialectical process of "decentering and recentering" of the subject's identity in a process which she describes as "constant subversion and overdetermination of one by the others, which make possible the generation of 'totalizing effects' within a field characterized by open and indeterminate frontiers" (1992:372).

Melucci interprets social movements as a complex interaction between three factors; "ends, means, and relationships with the environment" (Escobar, 1992:72). Escobar likens this view

to the concepts of resource mobilization theory in that it is an alternative for an objectivist position in analyzing collective action. For example, McAdam's model of resource mobilization includes a category which he calls insurgent consciousness:

> Insurgent consciousness is a collective state of understanding which stems from the subjective interpretation of the objective social situation itself. It is a state of being which perceives, interprets and explains a social situation in such a way that compels people to collectively organize and act to change the social situation. (McAdam, 1982:62)

Melucci's criteria, similarly focuses on how an action system is elaborately constructed over time. He refers to his principle category as "collective identity:"

> Collective identity is an interactive and shared definition produced by several individuals and concerned with the orientations of action and the fields of opportunities and constraints in which the action takes place; by "interactive and shared" I mean a definition that must be conceived as a process, because it is constructed and negotiated through a repeated activation of the relationships that link individuals. The process of identity construction, adaptation and maintenance always has two aspects; the internal complexity of an actor (the plurality of orientations which characterizes him), and the actor's relationship with the environment (other actors, opportunities and constraints). (Melucci, 1988a:342, quoted in Escobar, 1992:72)

Again this unorthodox theoretical approach opens the way to looking at the phenomenon of social change as not just a fact or an event but a process. The conventional event and fact-based theories e.g. structural functionalism, inhibit analysis by making "invisible a crucial network of relationships that underlie collective action before, during, and after the events" (Escobar, 1992:73).

The process level of social movement formation is where the creation of "cultural models and symbolic challenges" occur. Melucci calls this a "submerged reality" that represents the nature and unfulfilled promise of social action (1992:73). This theory describes contemporary social movements as "networks submerged in everyday life" which experiment with the "practice of alternative frameworks of meaning." Individual commitment is usually not highly obvious, and the collectives incorporate "limited areas, for limited phases and by means of moments of mobilization which are the other, complementary phase of the submerged networks..." Melucci elaborates:

> What nourishes [collective action] is the daily production of alternative frameworks of meaning, on which the networks themselves are founded and live from day to day...This is because conflict takes place principally on symbolic grounds, by challenging and upsetting the dominant codes upon which social relationships are founded in high density information systems. The mere existence of a symbolic challenge is in itself a method of unmasking the dominant codes, a different way of perceiving and naming the world.(Melucci, 1988b:248, quoted in Escobar, 1992:73)

This approach diverges theoretically from previous macro studies of social conflict and enters the domain of ethnographical, micro sociological and anthropological inquiry. Implicit in the importance placed on addressing resistances at the everyday, micro level of the social actor instead of the traditional approach which analyses only the response of the "masses" to a structural system of domination, is the power attributed to multiple acts of small resistance and the effect these have on the production and reproduction of culture and its symbols.

In the analytical outcomes using a methodology that is the outgrowth of this theorizing, the analyst arrives at a picture of the agents and collectives involved in social action that has the potential to go far beyond the mere typologies of traditional social enquiry. Escobar's example of a possible outcome suggests that:

> They [agents and movements] would appear as engaged in the self-production of their reality in multifaceted and complex ways, including their responses to harsh social and economic conditions. (Escobar, 1992:77)

Furthermore, the narrow stereotypes of social actors, women for example, could be reinterpreted much more broadly; for instance, as "thinkers, cosmologists, creators of worlds" (Behar, 1990:230).

It is the contention of contemporary development's radical critics that one of the key factors explaining the rise of new social movements is a "crisis of development in the south" (Pieterse, 1992:6). One nexus between political culture, social movements, and development is clearly power; the capability to control decisions about resource allocation, the distribution of wealth and the use of coercion.

The next chapter posits a dialectic between facts and values, looking at various theories of development and their radical critiques. The argument for the incorporation of political and cultural categories in analyzing development is discussed by contrasting prevailing theories of

development with the approaches of liberation theology to the debate and the discourse of the Zapatista movement in Chiapas.

CHAPTER 3

FACT AND VALUE!: RADICALLY RESTRUCTURING DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRACY

> **"The serious poverty that we share with our fellow citizens has a common cause: the lack of liberty and democracy. We think that authentic respect for the liberties and democratic will of the people are the indispensable prerequisites for the improvement of the economic and social conditions of the dispossessed of our country." (Communiqué of CCRI-CG of the EZLN, *El Tiempo* January 6, 1994, Chiapas)**

DEVELOPMENT OR DOMINATION?

Critiques of the development enterprise in the 1990s have become increasingly radical as scholars, researchers, and practitioners acknowledge the intractability of worldwide poverty and suffering. The Zapatistas aptly offer their explanation for the failure of development in their writings. Development's critics tried to bring the political and cultural dimensions of the problem to the fore internationally as early as the 1960s. In response, from time to time, there were waves of reform within the development establishment that attempted to attack what was thought to be the root causes of so-called underdevelopment. Inevitably, these missed the mark (Clarke, 1991; Ferguson, 1994).

Contemporary analysts in the 1990s, including the EZLN, claim the failures of development lie in not acknowledging that these issues are intrinsically political (Amin, 1990; Clarke, 1991; Esteva, 1991; Escobar, 1992; Ferguson, 1994; Knippers Black, 1991; Sachs et al., 1992; Shiva, 1991).

The liberation theology movement in Latin America in this respect, was theoretically and practically a vanguard movement whose influence was substantial in the southern region of Mexico. Its body of theory and practice dovetails nicely with much of the current analysis by progressive social scientists and development practitioners about the root causes of

maldevelopment, the significance of agency, and the role of hegemonic processes in creating and perpetuating the current global state of extreme economic inequality and social injustice.

Goldsworthy, in arguing for the incorporation of political assumptions into development theorizing asserts that:

> ....it is a necessary part of the task of political analysis to perceive the relationships between development and politics as relationships between development and coercion, or development and consent; between development and repression or development and liberation. (Goldsworthy, 1988:525)

Arguably, the current development process and the knowledge systems that support it, can be seen to epitomize a significant global and national structure of domination in the 20th century (Amin, 1989;1990; Escobar, 1981;1984;1992; Esteva, 1991;1992; Shiva, 1987;1992). Moreover, Third World analysts have attributed hegemonic characteristics, including extra-national political and economic control, to the prevailing economic development process. This situation is frequently compared with 19th century systems of colonialism in the scope and effectiveness of political and economic control (Sachs, ed., 1992). Concomitantly, intense interest exists in discovering and developing sources of countervailing oppositional force to this dominance. Social movements and the democratic transformation of civil society are being looked at as the sources of such power.

Underlying hegemonic structures and processes, are what development jargon labels the "beneficiaries". Recent development theorizing, especially what is termed "alternatives to development", seeks to integrate the total social context of people into the development debate; politics, religion, and culture as well as economics. The aim is to arrive at an equitable and ecologically sustainable model of human growth, betterment and change that is people-centred as opposed to market controlled. This suggests a paradigm which contains explicit normative assumptions. For example, Goldsworthy describes development as:

> ...an idea which combines the moral with the material. It is a moral idea in that it is about human betterment, fulfillment, the enrichment of lives through the expansion of choice; and a material one in that it is about overcoming material poverty through the creation and optimal distribution of wealth. (Goldsworthy, 1988:25)

Desarrollismo (developmentalism) is the pejorative term used in Latin America for development which is perceived as a band-aid type of reform, focusing on technology transfer, linear economic growth and global market strategies. This describes the contemporary model in Latin America which in general, fails to address issues of power and distribution of wealth. Accordingly, its Third World critics view development as an anachronistic concept even though it is still being used to prescribe solutions to "underdevelopment" (Sachs ed., 1992). They conclude that it has been ineffective in addressing the issues of extreme poverty and hegemonic politics. *Desarrollismo* ignores or makes peripheral questions of ethics, politics and culture.

The EZLN's Subcomandante Marcos writes enigmatically about the "benefits" the poor were supposed to receive from *desarrollismo* in Chiapas:

> (The First Wind) The one from above tells how the almighty government was so touched by the misery of the indigenous people of Chiapas, that it gave them hotels, jails, a military barracks, and a military airport. And also tells how the beast feeds on the blood of the people, and other unhappy and unfortunate events.(essay by Marcos and text of a video, "Dos Vientos, Una Tormenta y Una Profecia",(1992), Chiapas: text reprinted and translated in the *Anderson Valley Advertiser*, Aug 31/94, Vol.42,#31, California)

Emancipation and liberation not surprisingly then, became operative terms in seeking to replace the hegemonic discourse of development. Significantly, development discourse negatively characterizes and classifies subaltern classes of people and nations as needy, underdeveloped, poverty stricken, ignorant, conservative, backward over-populaters (Esteva, 1992; Escobar, 1984,1989,1992; Kothari, 1987; Pieterse, 1991; Rahnema, 1986; Sachs et al, 1992). Escobar and others declare that the current development discourse indeed, invented, and continues to manage, the Third World (Escobar, 1988:524).

DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE: Discord or Harmony?

Competing models of contemporary development can be categorized by typifying them as representing either harmonious or conflictive assumptions about the interests of actors and

nation-states (Knippers Black, 1991). Accordingly, the former, championed by neoliberal, modernization and diffusionist schools of thought, posits mutual interest and benefit in economic growth and global expansion of the market place. It also assumes that benefits are derived by guaranteeing individual free choice and action in the market place, with minimal interference from the state. The model emphasizes that the benefits of economic growth have a significant potential "trickle-down" effect. Political democracy and pluralism are conceptualized as positive outcomes of this system (1991:24-28).

Thus, underdevelopment is explained by the existence of "imperfect" market mechanisms, and a lag between the emergence of modern systems of production to replace "primitive" and "traditional" ones. The adoption of the appropriate and prescribed technological innovation is therefore, assumed to be crucial in stimulating the changes required in overcoming the "developmentalist's" conception of a state or stage of underdevelopment. Indeed, this model predicated on economic growth and the supremacy of the free market, assumes that development is an evolutionary process that is characterized by definite stages (Rostow,1960).

Third World countries represent economies in a lower, more primitive stage. This perspective has dominated the discourse on development at least since the 1940s even though its philosophical bases were the liberal thinkers of the late 19th century and the ideas of the Enlightenment.

In contrast, theories about development which begin with the assumption of conflict are influenced by the social analysis of Karl Marx and the tradition of socialist thought. In fashioning the analytic tools for explaining inequitable social relations Marx elaborated concepts of economically dominated groups and nation-states (class struggle, class consciousness). Latin American scholars and critics have been deeply influenced by these concepts. As a result, dependency and world systems theories of development, and the theory of the "development of underdevelopment," analyses originating in Latin America in the mid twentieth century, portray the motives and outcomes of modern development processes as exploitive, oppressive, and imperialistic (Amin, 1990; Baran, 1960; Cardoso, 1969; Dos Santos, 1967; Frank, 1966; Marini, 1973; Quijano, 1971; Wallerstein, 1974).

Some of the key tenets of dependency theory are:

1) a relation of interdependence between two or more economies
2) the relationship is unequal in that the centre or metropole in a trading relationship is dominant and self-sustaining while the peripheral countries or satellites are dependent on the centre for expansion and lose their ability to be self-sustaining
3) "the laws of development" in these theories prevent the full development of peripheral economies relative to the centre
4) underdevelopment is due to the peripheral countries integration into this exploitive system of international capitalism
5) industrialization of a satellite economy leads to even greater dependency.

A massive development program of modernization and technology transfer called the Alliance for Progress was launched in 1961 in Latin America by the United States under the Kennedy administration. Its outcome became a decisive factor in the analysis of the *dependistas* and other Latin American social critics including the progressive Catholic Church. The conclusions of its own evaluative study in 1969 indicated that the Alliance for Progress had been a failure according to the program's own criteria for development e.g. the elimination of poverty and the democratization of Latin America (Smith, 1991:112).

Smith argues that this failure was a key factor in the growth of insurgent consciousness particularly within church-linked social movements, but also, importantly, it appeared to confirm the newly emerging theories about the nature of the prevailing development enterprise. Latin American "progressives" considered the program "less a good idea that failed than a self-serving strategy of North American imperialism that succeeded" (1991:114). These perceptions were a powerful condemnation of reformist development strategies: the inability of the modernization project to solve the problems of extreme poverty and lack of democratic development.

World systems theory also describes the world economy as divided into centre and periphery and focuses on the effect of international trade on national economies and social formations of the world economy. However, the world system approach tends to call attention

to "non-state actors" like transnationals rather than "focusing on interactions among governments" (1991:29). These models also deal with the international division of labor and capital, reinterpreting the Marxist theory of class struggle emphasizing its global dimension.

However, these modes of analysis including dependency theories, tended overall not to challenge the linear concept of economic progress nor did they expand much beyond the economic determinism also exemplified by development theories of modernization and diffusion. Similarly, they are "grand" overarching theories, poorly grounded in the actual social milieu of the so-called exploited masses. On the whole, they lack the analytic attention that theorizing about social movements has given to subjectivity and agency and hence, culture and politics. The inadequacies of this group of theories about development are pointed out by Henfrey:

> ...the alternative search for a generalized model and autonomous theory of dependence--at heart an ideological one--appropriated the terms of discussion, stunting the much more methodological, concrete, and analytic option. Hence the striking features of dependency writing... are its overemphasis on the external, its economism at the expense of an understanding of the social relations of production, and its repetitive generality, with the lasting dearth of substantive case studies. (Henfrey, 1981:27, quoted in Chilcote, 1984:66)

DEVELOPMENT AND LIBERATION

Development without democracy, freedom and social justice can be viewed as an oxymoron. This represents the perception of the EZLN and is also consistent with the analysis of liberation theology. Former priest and writer Phillip Berryman, states:

> The very notion of "development" is misleading insofar as it sees change as essentially and unfolding--a gradual, incremental process. When the Latin American economies are effectively controlled by oligarchic-military elites and the world economy is dominated by the wealthy Western countries, "development" cannot lead to a decent life for the poor majority...The term "liberation" is understood in contradistinction to "development" (1987:91).

Similarly, a growing number of social analysts critical of the effects of development conceived of as modernization of the Third World, emphasize the "normative deficiencies of modernism"

particularly as a strategy for human betterment (Falk, 1988). In his critique of modernism and developmentalism Dutch social critic, Jan Nederveen Pieterse claims:

> Modernism and its simple positivism no longer hold up epistemologically to contemporary standards of the critique of knowledge. Out of the implosion of linear, futurist discourses postmodernism has emerged. ...postmodernism stresses ambiguity, indeterminacy, irreverence and deconstruction. It indicates historical and semantic instability. As a social philosophy it may be regarded as the cultural expression of the postindustrial or information society." (Pieterse, 1991:24)

According to a radical conceptualization of the condition of poverty, the liberation of people from exploitive economic relationships and, the freedom to interpret life in a way that goes beyond the rationalist search for meaning, are key components of an alternative to development. Falk asserts that there is a growing body of opinion advocating a "loosening of the modernist grip on the political imagination" (1988:381). He explains that this changed perception is altering "our (Western) sense of history" as moving all in the same direction, and creates "cultural space for a variety of new forms of politics that share the urge to counter the destructiveness and spiritual dryness of modernism..." (1988:381). Indigenous movements seeking autonomous forms of governance in Chiapas and elsewhere fall into this category.

Indeed, Escobar asserts that the paradigm of development as modernization and diffusion which appeared after the Second World War, actually constructed the Third World and "underdevelopment" as social realities. Likewise, liberation theology, Pieterse argues, manifests an opposition to 20th century modernism and the development process that it currently embodies (1992:9).

POLITICAL THEOLOGY: an Option for the Poor[1]

The Latin American catholic hierarchy who met in Medellin, Columbia in 1968, briefly supported this radical position respecting the socio-economic development they witnessed in

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[1] Berryman defines the strategic position adopted by liberation theology called "an option for the poor". He states: "It is out of an encounter with the poor that liberation theology's questions arise. Intellectually, liberation theology may incorporate elements of social science and Marxism, a reinterpretation of Latin American history, or contact with contemporary philosophy-e.g. hermeneutics-but the starting point to which it continually returns is this ongoing dialogue with the poor" (Berryman,1987:42).

Latin America. At least one hundred "expert advisors" were responsible for drafting a document condemning the conventional development process commonly referred to in Latin America as modernization or by its critics *desarrollismo*. This document was subsequently approved by the Latin American Bishops Conference (CELAM), representing 600 bishops.

The event initiated a significant expansion of the debate in Latin America about the nature and consequences of development. It also represented an early attempt to deconstruct the discourse of development as the following anecdotal evidence suggests. It is claimed by a participant at the conference, that an "expert advisor", observed in the process of editing the document, was replacing the key word "development" each time it was encountered with the word "liberation" (Andres Aubry,1994:interviewed in Chiapas).

CELAM thus became a key institutional critic of development in the ten years after Medellin. Some theologians now focused on revitalization of the Church in the context of a Latin America where the trend in pastoral work was to move from social to political involvement. The text of the 1968 document produced at Medillin denounced "institutionalized violence" and referred to it as a "situation of sin" (expanding the traditional notion of sin focused on individual transgressions of divine law) (Berryman, 1987:48). Berryman continues:

> ...they called for "sweeping, bold, urgent and profoundly renovating changes", they described education as a process that could enable people "to become agents of their own advancement." (1987:23-24)

The document also talked about "*comunidades eclisiales de base*" or CEBs (Christian base communities), small lay-led community groups of Christians. Their aim was to create a "popular Church" (grassroots church) and develop a critical consciousness in their members about the societal structures that impact on their lives. The methodology of popular education[2]

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[2] This model for adult education is based on the work of Paulo Freire with illiterates in Brazil and later Chile. It stresses the experience of the learner and opposes "top-down" approaches in which the one who knows, e.g. the teacher, imparts knowledge to the student who is presumed ignorant. Popular education aims at bringing poor people to a critical consciousness of their situation in society. Berryman notes: "The 'Freire method' has provided a model of work in which outsiders...can go to the popular classes in a nonpaternalistic way. As a method, it has given church people, social workers, and organizers a sense of what to do, whether directly in literacy classes, or in using the conscientization approach to help the community come together, articulate its needs, and become organized. They can be what Antonio Gramsci calls 'organic intellectuals'" (Berryman, 1987:36).

and spiritual guidance from interpretive reading of the bible are used to generate a popular social process that claims to be politically empowering.

At the time few CEBs existed but in the future base communities would become very widespread due to the efforts of dedicated and radicalized clergy who went out to the poor using the methodology of liberation theology (1987:24). Pottenger affirms that "... heretofore concerned with the causes of political and economic 'development' the bishops now took up the increasingly popular concern for 'liberation' in a sociopolitical as well as theological sense" (Pottenger, 1989:15). This provided the impetus (the political opportunity) for further development of new pastoral practices that would join the reinterpretation of biblical passages and their symbolic meanings to achieving a just society through direct social action, cooperativism, consciousness raising, and community building (1987:15).

One other ecclesial document served a similar legitimizing and empowering function. It was issued by Pope Paul VI in 1967. *Populorum Progressio* (On the Progress of Peoples) was focused entirely on Third World issues. Although generally moderate in tone, it hinted at a strong critique of the existing international economic order and contained a passage which was frequently quoted by "progressive" Catholics:

> We know...that a revolutionary uprising-save where there is manifest long-standing tyranny which would do great damage to fundamental personal rights and dangerous harm to the common good of the country-produces new injustices, throws more elements out of balance and brings new disasters (cited in Berryman, 1987:20).

This 1968 meeting thus, marks the emergence of the liberation theology movement as an oppositional political and social force in Latin America and an early contemporary critic of development. Furthermore, it contained in its pronouncements the elements of a new discourse on development that, symbolically challenged the prevailing discourse. As a "reverse discourse" it emphasizes and embodies, agency, cultural revival, collective social action, liberation and democracy.

Many of CELAM's original advisors are catholic theologians and scholars who ultimately became a driving moral force and the intellectual power of the so-called "progressive" or popular Catholic Church in Latin America. The current Bishop of San Cristóbal de las Casas,

Samuel Ruiz García, was a participant in this meeting. Shortly thereafter, he took up his post in the Chiapan highlands diocese where a Mayan indigenous uprising began on 1 January 1994.

LIBERATION THEOLOGY AND SOCIAL ACTION

The fact that liberation theology grounds its moral and ethical concerns in social science gives it what Pottenger calls, a "peculiar methodology [which] holds basic religious moral concerns in tension with social sciences analytical criteria, both of which are pulling in different directions" (Pottenger, 1989:221). He concludes that liberation theology above all is a political theology, and that:

> ...as a critical theory from Christian faith,...becomes itself the methodology for a radical critique of society. Hence, liberation theology claims to provide the framework for more than an assessment of the political economies of Latin America; it also claims to provide a moral grounding for engaging in political action. (1989:221)

It is the political nature of the theology and the reorientation of pastoral practices that has captured the imagination of social change theorists and activists, and the enmity of those committed to the status quo in Latin America.[3]

Subsequently, Pottenger points to the potentially positive role the theology serves in solving the "ultimate epistemological problem of modernity" which he declares is "the disjunction between facts and values" (1989:4). This theological framework thus, provides its adherents with both ethical and pseudo-scientific grounds for analyzing and acting upon, the effects of

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[3] The bishop of San Cristóbal has been subject to death threats and attacks by Chiapan conservatives. The former governor of Chiapas Patrocinio González Garrido, and the Pope's representative in Mexico, Jeronimo Prigione, have campaigned with Rome to have him removed from office based on Don Samuel's doctrinal interpretations considered to be reductive and not in conformity with the Churches' teachings. Furthermore, he was accused of pastoral practices that were exclusive because his diocese focuses on the poor and the indigenous. No doubt statements like the following contributed to his unpopularity amongst elites. Bishop Ruiz in a pastoral letter asserts: "We are a dependent country at the level of states, *municipios, ejidos* and communities. The breaking of this dependence will be initiated on the fringe, when the marginalized and oppressed become conscious and organized. The State does not permit this rupture because it would fracture its hegemonic project; therefore it seeks to control the people and maintain them without awareness and organization through political, economic ideological and politico-military controls" (Bishop's Pastoral Letter, Aug 6/93, Chiapas: reported in *Proceso*, #899, Jan 24/94, Mexico).

"modernizing" development processes. Using this methodology, the instrumentalism of the developmentalist's paradigms is challenged. Liberation theology is, hence, a social and political theory which allows the analysis of "development" to go "beyond instrumentalism to consider an essentialist conceptualization of politics" (Goldsworthy, 1988:524).

BEYOND INSTRUMENTALISM: Essentialist Politics

From an essentialist perspective, politics is perceived of as a domain unto itself that has its own elemental characteristics including "... its `own' normative properties" (1988:525). Hence, politics is not just understood as a means towards a goal (e.g. overcoming poverty, enhancing human dignity), where politics plays a mediating role, responding to social forces but is defined as a distinctive normative field consisting of the following components; "the problems of, and connections between, freedom and repression, domination and self government" (1988:525).

Australian political scientist, David Goldsworthy emphasizes that the essentialist understanding of politics is reflected in discourses that use terms such as authority, hierarchy, order, legitimacy, participation, and struggle. Furthermore, these concerns are conceived of as lying at the "very centre of the idea of politics" (1988:525) and thus, can be comprehended through the "antinomies of consent and coercion, freedom and repression" (Nolutshungu, 1982:12 quoted in Goldsworthy:525). Goldsworthy asserts that:

> ...politics always has a self-validating claim to be studied according to its intrinsic concerns, and is not just a conditioning or mediating or dependent variable; and political analysis should be pursued in full awareness of this sense in which politics is irreducible. In development studies, it thus becomes a necessary part of the task of political analysis to perceive the relationships between development and politics as relationships between development and coercion, or development and consent; between development and repression, or development and liberation. (Goldsworthy:525)

Just as the attempt is being made to integrate ethics and justice into theorizing about social movements, new concepts about the normative nature of politics are entering into alternative theorizing about development models. In Latin America the liberation theology movement

particularly at the grassroots, activist level, reinforces this conceptualization of the political. This is indicative of attempts to close the theoretical gap between fact and value alluded to by Pottenger. It reveals the importance of cultural context in the analysis of development processes. At the same time, it broadens the debate about what the causes of underdevelopment really are, arguably, extending the range of solutions to so-called underdevelopment.

In this context, the solutions to maldevelopment appear to be more diverse, non-universal, and, culturally, temporally, and spacially determinable. This kind of alternative development theory allows for degrees of ambiguity in understanding human social behavior and production. It also requires that social processes, development being one of them, be recognized; as multi-dimensional/directional, not linear progressions; as particular not universal; as spiritual and psychological not only material or economic; and finally, as preeminently, political.

Some of the elements of this model of development have been articulated by the Zapatista's spokesperson Subcomandante Marcos:

> We think that revolutionary change in Mexico is not just a question of one kind of activity. It will come strictly speaking, from neither an armed revolution, nor an unarmed one. It will be the result of struggles on several fronts, using a lot of methods, various social forms, with different levels of commitment and participation. And the result will be, not the triumph of a party, organization, or alliance of organizations with their particular social programs, but rather the creation of a democratic space for resolving the confrontations between different political proposals. This democratic space will have three fundamental premises which are already historically inseparable: the democratic right of determining the dominant social project, the freedom to subscribe to one project or another, and the requirement that all projects must point the way to justice. (Subcomandante Marcos, "The sup will take of his mask, if Mexico takes off its mask.", *El Tiempo*, Jan 20/94, Chiapas)

This conceptual approach to a development process indeed, suggests an alteration in the contemporary perception of representative, electoral democracy, the autonomy of ethnic or other distinct societal groups, and the value assigned to individual versus collectively determined social projects.

DEVELOPMENT AS A WORLDVIEW: "the Deconstruction of the West"?[4]

Developmentalism or *desarrollismo* is characteristic of the contemporary concepts of socio-economic change frequently described as modernization in Latin America. However, radical critics of this process, both Third World and western, have begun to conceptualize this process of modernization in a much broader historic framework. For instance, Pieterse claims:

> Developmentalism is not merely a policy of economic and social change, or a philosophy of history. It reflects the ethos of western culture and is intimately intertwined with western history and culture. (Pieterse, 1991:25)

Other analysts such as Escobar, (1992;1991;1990;1989) describe the historical emergence of developmentalism as "a political arrangement" consolidating the exercise of power internationally through a discourse which is a component of western hegemony in the post colonial world. It is professionalized, in that it has a set of techniques and practices which generate, diffuse, and validate knowledge. Furthermore, developmentalism has been institutionalized, providing a field "in which, and from which, discourses and techniques are produced, recorded, stabilized, modified, and put into operation" (Escobar, 1987:431; Ferguson, 1994:25-73). Essentially, developmentalism has been responsible for the social construction of the Third World and its defining concept "underdevelopment".

Developmentalism in this typology, is seen as a secular ideology that characteristically depicts the history and nature of the beliefs and symbols forming the structure of human consciousness in western and industrialized societies (Smart, 1983). Its roots lie in the 18th century period known as the European Enlightenment. It is a belief-system of complexity that has sustained the expansion of free-market capitalism while at the same time, paradoxically supporting various experiments with state socialism in the twentieth century.

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[4] Pieterse explains: "The deconstruction of the west is about returning the West to world history. This follows from the logic of decolonization. It also follows from the crisis of the western development model, not least in the West itself. This may yield a basis for reopening the debate on rationality and values" (Pieterse, 1991:25).

Moreover, it has a system of doctrines e.g. economism (capitalism or Marxism), militarism, evolutionism, scientism, nationalism; a mythology, e.g. the Greek origins of western culture, democracy, and modernism itself; ethical and ritual dimensions, e.g. materialism, utilitarianism and consumption; social dimensions, e.g. the economy, bureaucracy, the state, the nuclear family; and is finally, experiential, e.g. people buy, sell, consume and produce and go to war in a ritual way (Smart:7-8).

Smart characterizes modernity itself as mythological, with much of the "force and power of older religious symbols" (Smart:10). Otto Ullrich, sociologist and engineer, writing on the history and philosophy of technology argues:

> Industrial society thereby acts in accordance with its central myth as to the meaning of life. ....through the production of material goods, the necessary conditions for the good life were supposed to have been created; through work, science and technology, the 'secret path to paradise' was supposed to have been forged, as Francis Bacon, one of the theoretical founders of modernity, formulated it some 300 years ago.(Ullrich, 1992:278)

Moreover, this myth included a plan for human salvation that could be applied worldwide. Through it, the conditions of "human happiness, emancipation and redemption from all evils" (1992:279) could be achieved. This ethos underlies the basic "developmentalist" assumptions which Gustavo Esteva asserts are, "...the oneness, homogeneity and linear evolution of the world" (Esteva, 1992:12). As a worldview, developmentalism legitimizes the subordination of countries and or peoples who lack the requisite technological level of development and labels them "underdeveloped". It devalues subordinate systems of knowledge and their forms of social organization. For those on the lowest rung of the evolutionary ladder, history is only beginning. The correspondent discourse of development hence, has invented an ahistorical, underdeveloped, subordinate and dependent category of people and countries named "the Third World".

In the discourse of the EZLN, modernity in the guise of development has been "a deceptive dream" from which Mexican civil society needs to be awakened. The North American Free Trade Agreement symbolizes the crowning achievement of the neoliberal agenda and a death warrant to indigenous people. Metaphorically, the Zapatistas appeal to civil society to recover

the power to construct their own society by removing the mask of modernity they adopted from their oppressors:

> ...when Mexican civil society takes off its own mask it will realize, with much greater impact, that it has been sold an image of itself that is fake, and that the reality is more terrifying than people supposed. If we show each other our faces the big difference will be that the "sup-Marcos" always knew what he looked like, while civil society will have to wake from the long and lazy dream which "modernity" imposes on everything and everybody. (Subcomandante Marcos, Communiqué, *El Tiempo*, Jan 20, 1994, Chiapas)

The current Mayan resistance in Chiapas thus typifies a struggle of a people against submission and subjection to an ethos which threatens their material and spiritual lives, and their cultural distinctiveness. It represents an assertion of historical difference, and an opposition to privileged knowledge. The insurgents challenge the economic and ideological assumptions of a dominant worldview that impinges on their right to define who they are and in which social projects they will participate.

The EZLN thus, calls on the dominant Mexican culture instead, to become an interlocutor in a process of change, a transition to a form of democracy that could conceivably result in restructuring relations of power in Mexico. In this context the changes demanded are aimed at deconstructing the hegemony of not only the state-party system, but also, the western worldview that sustains this dominance.

Escobar maintains that development discourse is actually the fundamental way in which reality is constructed by the industrialized and westernized parts of the world and therefore, in the so-called Third World, it is essential to articulate an oppositional discourse which would begin forming "the matrix for a new political imaginary", providing new points for institutionalizing and exercising "anti-development" struggles beginning with the search for alternatives to development (Escobar, 1992:429).

CHAPTER 4

RESISTANCE & SURVIVAL IN CHIAPAS: THE MAYA, AGENTS OF HISTORY

"We are the product of 500 years of struggle:... We have been denied the most elemental education so that others can use us as cannon fodder and pillage the wealth of our country. They don't care that we have nothing, absolutely nothing, not even a roof over our heads: no land, no work, no health care, no food, no education. Nor are we able to freely and democratically elect our political representatives, nor is there independence from foreigners, nor is there peace nor justice for ourselves and our children." (El Despertador Mexicano-Declaration of War, Lacandon Jungle, December, 1993 by the CCRI-CG of the EZLN, Chiapas)

This chapter is about exclusionary development and politics in the southeast of Mexico and its complementary political practice-repression. It analyzes the domination that colonizing and modernizing forces (development) maintain over peoples at the margin of the current economic system. The indigenous and *campesino* population of Chiapas, following several hundreds of years of colonial subjugation and repression (1528-1821), and subsequent internal colonialism is now attempting to liberate itself from an economic and political structure that limits its capacity as producers, while denying them access to basic social, legal and political rights.

The analysis of rural resistance in Chiapas illustrates how the interests of the dominant sectors of Chiapan society have been historically promoted and supported at the expense of the peasantry. This vision of progress, earned Chiapas a reputation as the "slave state" of Mexico in the middle and latter years of the 19th century (Benjamin, 1993:59). The politics of development in Chiapas parallels a continuous history of institutionalized racism and human rights violation, debt peonage, unfulfilled promises of land reform, and ecocide. Arguably, Chiapas suffers from a form of internal colonialism that picked up where the Spanish left off at Independence in 1821 (Knight, 1992:116).[1]

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[1] Rodolfo Stavenhagen defines internal colonialism as the socio-economic condition of the indigenous after the nineteenth century expansion of capitalism in Mexico together with the ideology of economic liberalism. "We consider this stage a second form of colonialism, which we will call 'internal colonialism'. Indians of traditional communities found themselves once again in the role of a colonized people: they lost their lands, were forced to work for 'strangers', were integrated against their will into a new monetary economy, and fell under new forms of

MADRE TIERRA:[2] *Another Vision of Governance and Human Rights*

The Maya call themselves the "people of corn". Their creation myth tells us how the first people of their nation were created from this staple food. At the centre of most indigenous/*campesino* identities and struggles is a critical common element: the land. The new *Zapatismo* fortifies and amplifies an old call to restructure social and political relations based on the values of justice, democracy, and liberty. It consists of a new discourse which revitalizes Mexican nationalism putting humanitarian and indigenous values at the centre of inclusive and plural social structures.

Specifically, the question of land as patrimony has a politico-economic and ethno-cultural dimension--the demand for autonomy in social organization and resource management. This is a direct challenge to contemporary development models based on liberal and neoliberal economic criteria: the western ethos of economic progress through free markets and liberal representative democracy. A plot of land in Chiapas is simply, a powerful symbol of the right to live. Subsistence crops ensure survival for the overwhelming majority of Mexican *campesinos*; but not only physical survival, also spiritual. Culturally, land as a heritage ensures the essential spiritual link with the ancestors who dictate customs, tradition and often, events and outcomes in daily life. Survival and reproduction hence, is a motor, and culture the energy, that drives the indigenous struggle for a dignified life ethically defined as democracy, liberty and justice:

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ctd.1 ... political domination" (1975:204).

[2] *Madre tierra* means mother earth. The indigenous of Chiapas commonly refer to the land using this metaphor. A 1992 report on an anti-NAFTA meeting, published in a Mexican *campesino* women's group pamphlet describes the indigenous/*campesino* concept of land: "....the land is not an object for *campesinos*, nor merchandise, but a living thing that should be loved, respected and cared for. The earth is our mother because she gives us life, feeds us, sustains us and receives us in death. The earth is worthy of the presence and the action of the transcendent God. The earth belongs to God and is a free and communal gift that our father God has given us to guarantee the lives of our children and our community." ("*Compañeras*", Bulletin #40, 4th Trimester, p.20,(1992), Mexico D.F.)

> We don't petition, beg or request democracy: we counsel, advise and demand it. If the political event of 1988 repeats itself, if there is not a peaceful transition to democracy, on our part, the men and women without a face have another way; war...[or] a government of transition to democracy and a new constitution that guarantees by law the accomplishment of the fundamental demands of the Mexican people for democracy, liberty and justice, demands that give voice to those without a voice, without a face, without a tomorrow, and life to our dead. (Speech by Marcos to the visiting delegation of the PRD headed by Cuahutémoc Cárdenas: *La Jornada*, May 17/94, Mexico D.F.)

Edward Said pointedly argues that culture is a weapon used by imperial powers to gain their conquests (Said, 1993:4-61). Development, contextualized as part of a dominant worldview, an integral component of "Western" culture with its corresponding discourse, has triumphantly penetrated the outer reaches of the world's cultures on a scale that was difficult to imagine when the concept was first operationalized in the 1940s and 50s. Chiapas represents one enclave of rural peasant and indigenous culture that survives on the periphery of modernization, demanding the right to be included in the construction of a new political project that respects and represents their diversity and capacity for envisioning other models of economic progress and systems of governance.

Accordingly, the new Zapatistas' vision is of a political space for making autonomous decisions locally and regionally about their own economic and socio-cultural existence. They declare:

> And we see that there must be change and that those who command should obey, and we see that this far away word, 'democracy,' that names government with reason, is good for the many and the few. The world is another world where the reason and will of true men does not govern any longer; we are few and forgotten, death and scorn walk with us, we are small, our word is ignored. (Communiqué from the CCRI-CG of the EZLN, *El Tiempo*, Feb 26,1994, Chiapas)

A trajectory of peasant revolt and resistance is traceable from the early "caste wars" and popular uprisings against dispossession and cultural extinction of the colonial period,[3] through the mid-nineteenth century post-independence disorder (1821), to the post Porfiriato

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[3] 1553-1556--Rebellion of the Lacandons; 1584--Movement of the Maya of Suchiapa; 1708-1712--five movements, in the west Tzotzil and the east Tzeltal; 1727--Zoques and Tzeltals in northern Chiapas and southern Tabasco; 1868-1870--Tzotzil rebellion in Chamula; 1847-1901--Caste War of the Maya of the Yucatán (Barabas, 1987).

revolutionary struggles (1910-20) and the twentieth century mobilizations against severe state repressions of the 1970s and 80s. Alan Knight characterizes indigenous revolts as "not simply a knife and fork question", citing James Scott's argument of a peasant "moral economy" (Knight, 1992:112).[4] Knight argues:

> ...the logic of subsistence farming tends to generate a specific 'moral economy' which in turn underwrites, justifies and sustains popular mobilization. The mounting demands of landlords-and/or the state-thus provoke protests which are neither crude Pavlovian responses, devoid of ideas, nor yet the calculating, cost-benefit stratagems of rational individualists. (1992:112)

Zapatista discourse is testimony to a sentiment of "moral economy" which integrates the basic demand for control over their historic patrimony--land--with radical political change, social restructuring and cultural integrity but within an overall national political project for change. The detonator of revolt according to the rebels was the reform of Article 27 in 1992, followed by NAFTA (1994) which spelled the end to land reform and a way of life. Thus, the new *Zapatismo* speaks ethically of identity, liberty, pluralism, self-determination, and dignity as human rights.

A BOUNTIFUL LAND: The Exodus

Highland San Cristóbal de las Casas is frosty on a January morning, while in the bustling, modern, state capital of Tuxtla Gutiérrez, in the central lowland valley of the Grijalva River, the temperature reaches the high 30s as people rush to their jobs. This region along with the Pacific coastal region called the Soconusco, has the most highly developed commercial agriculture infrastructure with large plantation style agriculture (coffee, sugar, cacao), a legacy

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[4] "According to the 'moral economy' thesis, protest derives from the breakdown, under the impact of the market or the state, of a preexisting equilibrium, which, though exploitative, was tolerable in that it did not involve the denial of basic subsistence rights or the elimination of all reciprocity in the peasantry's relationship with landlords and the state" (Knight, 1994:41). Implicit in Scott's typology of a peasant moral economy is the emergence of "a dissident subculture", "an alternative moral universe in embryo" which is "an existentially true and just one, which helps unite its members as a human community and as a community of values" (Scott, 1976:240).

of development financed by foreign investment in the era of Porfirio Díaz (1876-1910). Eastward, in the rural highlands or *tierra fria* (cold land), the majority of people live on *ejidos* and in indigenous communities often adjacent to large privately owned *haciendas* (large land-holdings). Cattle ranching is the predominant commercial enterprise today and tourism is a growing industry.[5]

In a north and southeasterly direction, along the border with Guatemala and Tabasco State, the agricultural landscape changes into *tierra caliente* (hot land) again. Lower, rolling foot-hills, and grassy plains outside the eastern county seats of Ococingo, Altamirano, Palenque, Comitán and Las Margaritas, lead eventually into the *Selva Lacandona* (the Lacandon jungle).(See Figure 2 for locations of these towns.) This area too, is mountainous with strong, rushing rivers and wide canyons and valleys. Here the pine forests of the highlands change into lush, tropical vegetation; the roads are long, dusty and almost impassable when it rains; *ejidal* villages are small and isolated and usually surrounded by rocky land; the expansive pastures of large cattle ranches border on *ejidal* lands and indigenous *comunidades agrarias*.

In the Lacandon region barely fifty years ago, most of the land was rainforest. By 1970, estimates are that 100,000 migrants had settled in the region (Harvey, 1994:28) and 70,000 Guatemalan refugees in the early 1980s, mainly Mayas, spilled over the border fleeing repression there. Large scale timber exploitation for exportable, rare, exotic woods, extensive cattle ranching and eventually, *campesino* settlement, cleared the jungle of most of its magnificent canopy.[6] An agrarian development policy known by its critics as the "agrarian

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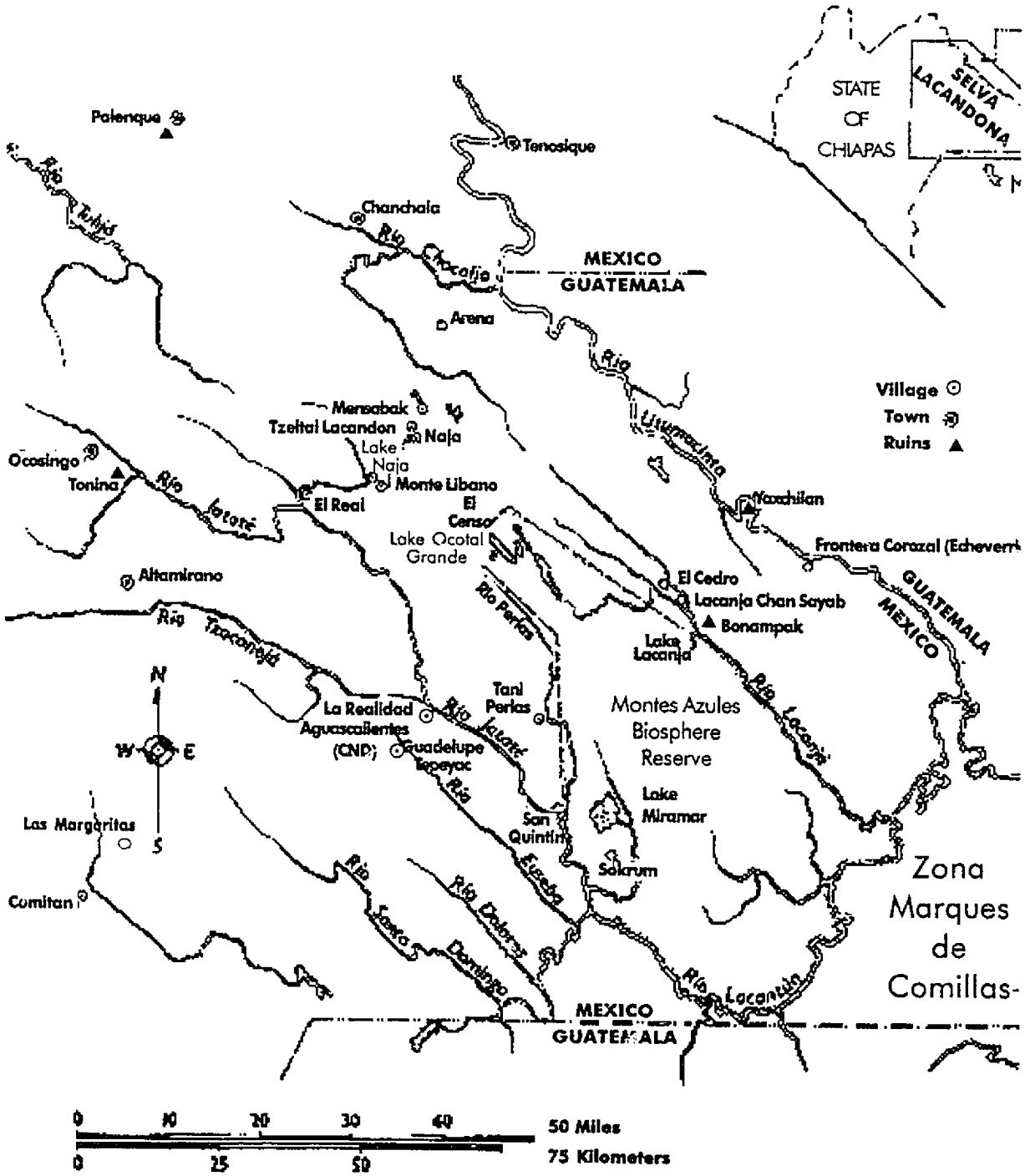
[5] In the 1980 the Mexican government initiated a tourism development program called *El Mundo Maya* (The Mayan World) which promotes tourism on the basis of archeological sites and the existence of an "exotic" group of indigenous who still wear traditional "costumes" and speak an ancient language. The Zapatistas commented on the image this portrays: "...but they didn't see the Indians as anything other than an anthropological object, a curiosity for tourists, part of a "jurassic park"... (Communiqué from the CCRI-GC of the EZLN, Jan 13/96, Chiapas)

[6] Timber exploitation began in the mid-nineteenth century in Chiapas by European timber companies. During the Porfiriato large concessions were given to French, Belgian and Spanish investors. In the twentieth century American capital, sometimes in partnership with Mexican investment, dominated the exploitation of timber until it was nationalized during the Cárdenas regime. From then on government consortiums took over enriching some of the Chiapan elites through political and bureaucratic corruption (Aubry, 1987:4).

Fig.2 - Selva Lacandona (Lacadon Jungle)



Adapted from JV Cotter & JD Nations: 1984

counter-reform" was initiated after the Cárdenas era in the 1940s and 1950s which in Chiapas focused on the promotion of cattle ranching and exportable crops (Reyes Ramos, 1992:84). One of the outcomes for the private landholders was legislation that protected commercially viable lands from redistribution. This was accomplished by the issuance of certificates of inaffectability. Large ranches and coffee plantations hence, maintained their hold on the best lands and continued to dominate the state's economy forcing the continued migration of *campesinos* from the highlands where a growing peasant population crowded them off small parcels of unproductive land. Furthermore, the construction of dams in the 1970s in the Central Valley dispossessed thousands more from their ancestral homes.

Increasingly, pastureland was created in the Lacandon where jungle soils are quickly exhausted from growing staple crops. *Ejidatarios* (landholders on *ejidos*) often turned to raising livestock, sometimes in association with private ranchers. Harvey reports, that by 1990 over 60 percent of land in the *Selva (jungle)* region had been converted to pasture (1994:28). This left only 30 percent of the land dedicated to maize and beans, and 10 percent to small scale coffee growing (Ascencio Franco & Leyva Solano, 1992:192). In a study of the growth of cattle production in the Lacandon, Ascencio Franco & Leyva Solano discovered that settlers often came to the *selva* with the intention of setting up ranches. Interestingly, the researchers found that settlers were often motivated by their experiences as farm hands and sharecroppers on large ranches in the areas they had left as well as by government policy (1992:269).

Much of this terrain of frontier settlement, deep in the heart of the Lacandon, today resembles a "moonscape" (Wild, interview, Nov 21/95) in contrast with the remaining jungle. Government data indicate that in 1976 one million hectares were dedicated to cattle ranching and 10 years later this had doubled (Balboa, 1987:3). In the state between 1982 and 1987, the amount of beef marketed increased by 400 percent (Harvey, 1994:9-12). Thomas Benjamin writes:

> During the 1970s the process of *ganaderización* in Chiapas-the expansion of pastures for cattle at the expense of cropland-apparently went too far. Cattlemen converted lands formerly rented or sharecropped by corn farmers into pastures, rented or simply invaded *ejido* lands, and expanded into wooded or jungle areas causing destructive

> deforestation and soil erosion. Following peasant farmers into the Lacandon forest on new government-built roads, cattlemen purchased or stole the cleared plots to form large ranches.(1989:232)

Other patches of rainforest remain in some of the un-"developed" lands of the contemporary Lacandon Indians. Andres Aubry describes it as "one of the most populated jungles in the world: there is hardly any jungle now,.... there are 7.5 inhabitants per hectare" (Aubry, 1987:6). In 1978 because of international pressure the Mexican government created, with the help of UNESCO, a reserve of 3,312 square kilometers called the Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve. However, by 1982 researchers discovered that "none of the activities or proposed objectives of the decree have been carried out, nor has the reserve been delineated" (Harris & Sartor eds.,1984:39). They also noted that settlers and cattlemen were continuing to clear and burn the reserve's rainforest at a rate of twenty square kilometers per year with more than half of the reserve officially designated as "areas for future colonization" (1984:39).

Here, on settler land, many of the descendants of the "men and women of corn" make *milpa* (traditional peasant cornfield using slash-and-burn technology). Small plots of coffee sometimes provide cash income and increasingly, cattle and pigs are being acquired by *ejidatarios*. Their staple crops of corn, beans, and chillies are more appropriate to the higher, cooler climate and richer soils of these *campesinos'* highland homelands but land there is no longer available in sufficient quality or quantity to ensure survival.

The Lacandon is now home to third and fourth generation Tzeltal, Tzotzil, Tojolobal, Chol and Zoque ethnic groups of Maya who once farmed the fertile valleys of the highlands and central lowlands of Chiapas. Spanish speaking *mestizo* peasants also settled in the Lacandon many from other states in Mexico. Both *mestizo* and Indian migrated here because they were promised a piece of land by the government in its attempt to quell social unrest and address demands for agrarian reform without redistributing the large land-holdings of the Chiapan agricultural elite e.g. ranchers and coffee plantation owners. Many of the new settlers had been dispossessed in land disputes, others by energy development, still others were exiled for their participation in peasant movements in other parts of Mexico. Some came initially as indentured labor to help exploit the fine tropical woods or gather *chicle* that brought high profits on the

international export market to state and private entrepreneurs. Others fled to the Lacandon as a refuge from exploitation as sharecroppers and indentured labour on the large coffee plantations and cattle ranches of other regions of Chiapas. This process of settlement on national lands began in the 1930s and intensified after the 1950s (Ascencio Franco & Leyva Solano, 1992:178).

Tucked away in this jungle are some of the awesome ruins of the ancient Mayan cities of Bonampak, Tonina, Yaxchilán, and Palenque. This area and some of the highlands surrounding touristic San Cristóbal, today is militarized, and the population is subject to a low-intensity war of threats, rape, intimidation, illegal arrests, torture and destruction of property.[7]

The physical geography, climate and population of Chiapas exhibits great diversity. It is a resource rich state. It is the ancient land of the Olmeca (4000-100 B.C.) and the Maya (classical period, 250-900 A.D.), cultures that existed on land where it is estimated, maize was cultivated and pottery produced as early as 7,000 B.C. (Orozco Zuarth, 1995:29). Between January 1, 1994 and February 9, 1995 all the land within the Lacandon was Zapatista controlled territory.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN CHIAPAS: Testimony

Jesuit priest Mardonio Morales, worked with the indigenous Tzeltal people for 30 years. On one of his early pastoral tours of the Lacandon in 1964, he first encountered PEMEX (Petroleo Mexicano-Mexican National Petroleum Company) plaques set in cement. As early as 1961, "in

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[7] See human rights reports-*Alzamos La Voz Por La Justicia*, Informe Anual-Julio 1994-Junio 1995, Centro de Derechos Humanos "Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas" Chiapas, Mexico (1996); *Informe Zona Norte, El Otro Cerco*", October 1995, San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas; *Tortura: Estado de Derecho?*, Informe Especial de Tortura, Centro de Derechos Humanos "Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas", Chiapas, Mexico (1995); *Codifying Repression: The Penal Code for the State of Chiapas*, A project of Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights, Dec/94, U.S.A.; *Chiapas: Situacion de Los Derechos Humanos-Enero-Diciembre de 1995*, Informe Anual de La Comisión de Derechos Humanos, CONPAZ, San Cristóbal de las Casas, Feb.1996. In the fifteen months between the 10 February 1995 and 12 June 1996 the urgent action response network, the Christian Task Force On Central America (CTFCA) in Vancouver B.C., received 25 requests for action, 14 from Amnesty International and 7 from human rights monitors in San Cristóbal (Records of CTFCA, June 1996, Vancouver).

the most remote regions of the jungle, oil had clearly been located," he states (*Proceso*, June 5, 1995, Mexico D.F.). He reports seeing other markers of red paint on rocks and over the years, how these measurements were extended by engineers whom peasants confirmed, came by with increasing frequency as time passed.

In the priest's assessment of "development" in this region from a 30 year perspective, he questions whether the indigenous people can ever have "their autonomous territory". He asserts, "I believe that this testimony I am now giving about what I have seen from 1964 to the present, and the discovery of the relationship between oil, timber, settlement, cattleization, and infrastructure, explains the government's hard-line, overbearing attitude [toward current indigenous/*campesino* demands, especially self-determination which would lead to control over natural resources]" (*Proceso*, June 5, 1995, Mexico).

Subcomandante Marcos describes resource wealth and development disparities in Chiapas in this testimony:

> Chiapas, with 75,634.4 square kilometers, some 7.5 million hectares, is the eighth biggest state in Mexico. It has 111 municipalities, organized for plunder into nine economic regions. It is home to 40% of the nation's plant varieties, 36% of its different kinds of mammals, 34% of its amphibians and reptiles, 66% of its bird species, 20% of its varieties of fresh water fish, and 80% of its butterfly species. 9.7 percent of the nation's rain falls on Chiapas. But its greatest wealth is the 3.5 million people of Chiapas, of whom two-thirds live and die in the countryside....For a state that produces petroleum, electric energy, coffee, wood, and livestock for the hungry beast [capitalist development] the Chiapan transportation system is a grotesque joke. Only two-thirds of the municipalities have paved roads; twelve thousand rural communities depend solely on mountain trails hundreds of years old. Since the time of Porfirio Díaz the railroad lines have followed the demands of the capitalist looters and not the needs of the Chiapan people. (Essay "*Dos Vientos*.... by Subcomandante Marcos, August,1992, published in *La Jornada*, Jan 20/94, Mexico D.F.; also a video script, (1993), Chiapas)

Chaos and ungovernability are watchwords in Chiapas today. Resource-rich Chiapas remains in political and economic turmoil in 1996, which makes it an unstable and risky environment for foreign investment. A nervous American investment advisor in January 1995, pleaded with the Mexican government "to eliminate the Zapatistas to demonstrate their effective control of the national territory and security policy" (Silverstein & Cockburn, 1995).

In February 1995, President Zedillo initiated a "low intensity war" in the region by issuing arrest warrants for the Zapatista leadership and authorizing the army to assist the federal police in capturing them. The army broke the year-old cease-fire line, the Zapatistas fled deeper into the jungle, and more than 20 people, the majority non-indigenous and non-Chiapans, were arrested throughout the country as presumed leaders of the EZLN.[8] Meanwhile, the patrimony of a "forgotten people" continues to benefit only a few.

THE FORGOTTEN AND FACELESS PEOPLE:

Collective Identity and Insurgent Consciousness

The Zapatista movement was born in the Lacandon jungle, where the most marginalized economic and social sector of the state ekes out a living in the canyons and disappearing rainforest. The politics of exclusion drove the "forgotten and faceless" here looking for a refuge from undignified lives of poverty and discrimination.

Gabriel Ascencio Franco and Xóchitl Leyva Solano, Mexican anthropologists, characterize migrations to the "*Selva*" as a first act of liberty, "The walk to the *selva* was for many Mayas, they claim, like "the exodus of the Jews" (1994:19). Aubry, furthermore, describes the Lacandon's historical role after the 1700s, (after annihilation or relocation of its original inhabitants by the colonialists), as "a social oasis of refuge" that received "successive waves [of refuge seekers] who chose freedom" (Aubry, 1987:5). The migrants did not ultimately win the freedom from repression, hunger and discrimination that they expected. Thus Marcos refers

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[8] The human rights commission of CONPAZ, a coalition of Chiapan NGOs, published a document in February 1996 reporting on human rights violations in the period from January to December 1995 (principally the period after the February military offensive into the Lacandon). It details the following rights affected over this time-frame, the frequency, and the agents involved:-personal security, 73; physical integrity, 70; personal liberty, 51; right to life, 21; Violation of due process of persons arrested, 13; freedom of association, 12; freedom of belief, 4. The federal army tops the list of agents involved with 71 violations, next the state Public Security Police, 28, third, the State Judicial Police, 28, fourth, militants of the PRI, 21, then the *guardias blancas* and municipal authorities, both with 14. The list continues with 14 other agents, government and private, from the immigration police and the federal Ministry of Justice, to ranchers and certain religious groups (*Chiapas: Situación de los Derechos Humanos, Enero-Diciembre de 1995*, Annual Report of the Commission for Human Rights, CONPAZ, San Cristóbal, Feb /96)

to "historical reason" as a key element in the emergence of their collective identity contributing to the birth of the Zapatista movement (Video, "*Marcos: Palabras y Historia*", (1995): Marca Diablo, Mexico). The rural population nationally is composed of 24 million people or 30 percent of the total Mexican population. A 1989 study by the U.N. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) stated that over half of this population now lives below the poverty line with seven million who are desperately poor (cited in Burbach & Rosset, 1994:6). Close to one million of the extremely poor are landless, and poverty is most highly concentrated among the Indian populations (1994:6).

For example, the indigenous compose 40 percent (1994:7) of the very poor in Mexico but constitute just 9 percent of the country's population[9] (Barry, 1992:223). The highest concentrations of indigenous populations are in the southern states of Chiapas, Oaxaca, Guerrero, and the Yucatán peninsula. Between 30 and 50 percent of the population of Chiapas is indigenous.[10] In slightly less than one third of its 111 *municipios* (counties), those who speak an indigenous language are in the majority (Orozco Zuarth, 1994:81).

In Chiapas poverty is endemic in the countryside. Of the state's 3.5 million inhabitants 19 percent of the economically active population receives no cash income; 39 percent earns less than minimum wage, about three dollars a day; 54 percent of Chiapans are malnourished and half live in houses with only dirt floors. Only 70 percent of children attend school but schools in indigenous communities and *ejidos* rarely go above the third grade, lacking teachers and a physical infrastructure (Burbach & Rosset, 1994:7).

The EZLN often refer to the Chiapan poor as a faceless people even though they have a proud 504 year history of resistance to tithes, taxes, debt peonage and various other forms of tutelage, slavery and racism. Benjamin cites historical evidence that: "The surviving colonial

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[9] This figure cited in Barry is from the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI) similar to the Canadian Indian Affairs Ministry. INI and the federal census of 1990 report 7.3 million indigenous but they only count indigenous over the age of five that speak an indigenous language so it significantly undercounts the population. Barry quotes one sociologist who estimates the real population to be three times that estimate (Barry, 1992:366).

[10] The government census used speakers of indigenous languages as the measure of "indigenousness" but social scientists like Collier and Bonfil Batalla emphasize culture as a determinant of "Indian-ness" as well.

oligarchy of the province--the clergy, landowners, and merchants located in the provincial capital in the Central Highlands--subsisted on the labor and the surplus production of the large nearby Indian populations whom the elites regarded as a "natural resource" (in the phrase of one contemporary)" (Benjamin, 1989:1). The indignities perpetrated by colonial and neocolonial institutions help frame the Zapatista discourse and symbols of a forgotten and faceless people. Their ski masks (worn primarily to conceal identity) for instance, symbolically identify them as insurgents seeking to transform themselves both individually and collectively.

Masking, apart from protecting individual identity, becomes a symbol reflecting social exclusion (Calderon, Piscitelli & Reyna, 1992:21). Transformation in the culture of "*México profundo*" (the syncretism of Spanish, rural *mestizo* and indigenous cultures), has long been symbolized by the mask in *campesino* rituals and celebrations (Cordry, 1980:147). Hence, it can be argued that the mask functions as a powerful unifying symbol of *Zapatismo*. It helps to create and sustain the collective consciousness and identity of peoples in resistance throughout Mexico. Grafitti and the phrase often chanted by protest marchers and Zapatista sympathizers supports this contention; "*Todos somos Marcos, todos somos Zapatistas*!" (We are all Marcos, we are all Zapatistas!). Who can tell who is behind the mask? Subcomandante Marcos drew an interesting, and revealing response from CND participants when he offered to remove his mask at the 1994 Convention in the Lacandon; they all shouted back, "No!"

Under the heading "War is a Matter of Politics", Marcos writes metaphorically about how and why the forgotten and faceless people of Chiapas developed an insurgent consciousness:

> They [the rest of Mexico] had the chance before to open their eyes and do something to stop the enormous historic injustice that the country imposed on its original inhabitants, but they didn't see the Indians as anything other than an anthropological object, a curiosity for tourists, part of a "jurassic park.....which, luckily, would disappear with a NAFTA that includes them only as disposable waste, because the death of those in the mountains doesn't matter much...They forgot that human dignity is not only the birthright of those who have their primary needs satisfied; those who have nothing material also have a right to that which makes us different from things and animals: dignity.(Communiqué of the CCRI-GC of the EZLN, *El Tiempo*, January 13, 1994, Chiapas)

George A. Collier, an anthropologist who has spent 30 years researching peasant life in Chiapas, posits that the current Zapatista movement is not exclusively an indigenous one but more accurately can be characterized as a peasant movement (Collier, 1994:7; Aubry, 1994:48). He points out that, "although the Zapatistas are demanding rights for indigenous peoples, they are first and foremost calling attention to the plight of Mexico's rural poor and peasants both indigenous and non-indigenous (Collier, 1994:7). Moreover, Zapatista communiqués are laden with obvious references to the broader issues of national political transformation as well as basic survival needs, and fundamental human rights affecting all Mexicans; "*nada para nosotros, todo para todos*" ("nothing for ourselves, everything for everybody").

In Chiapas the majority is the *campesino* and indigenous population. Collier defines the peasantry as:

> ...rural people who produce their own food or who are closely connected to others who produce for subsistence, as contrasted with those who farm commercial crops primarily for sale and profit. In southern Mexico, many peasants but not all, are indigenous people, descendants of those who were conquered and subordinated by the Spanish during the period of colonial rule. (Collier, 1994:7)

Guillermo Bonfil Batalla likewise asserts that customs and practices that are identifiably Indian are present in most rural *mestizo* communities of Mexico and even some urban *barrios*, although the *mestizo* group does not self-represent as part of indigenous culture and may not speak an Indian language:

> ...if one compares what occurs in an Indian community [with the rural *mestizo* peasant] its easy to observe that the similarities are greater than the differences in aspects as important as housing, food, agricultural and medical practices, and many other areas of social life. (Bonfil Batalla, 1987:43)

Particularly amongst the Mexican rural peasantry, it thus can be argued, that there is evidence of a blend of cultural forms as opposed to the "triumph of European culture over the indigenous" (Wright, 1989:273). This hybrid culture Bonfil Batalla calls "*México profundo*" and he emphasizes how it persists especially in the Mexican *campesino* or peasant into the so-called modern era and also significantly, into urban spaces of modernization even in Mexico

City (Bonfil Batalla, 1987:77). The constituency to which the discourse of *Zapatismo* potentially appeals, then, is a large cross-section of Mexico's underclass.

The Zapatista movement arose in communities illustrative of this kind of hybridized cultural form. Collier claims, that in the Lacandon, this phenomenon promoted a perception of shared interests and pluralism in a frontier region which is pluri-ethnic (Collier, 1994:36). This contrasts sharply with the conventional concept of the traditional highland area as "closed corporate communities" (Stavenhagen, 1969:168; Wolf, 1956), a widely contested conceptualization of current indigenous social organization in Chiapas. Studies of the subregion of the Lacandon known as Las Cañadas, by Ascencio Franco and Leyva Solano, also provide evidence of a syncretic culture including a *lingua franca* (Tzeltal) amongst a population that self identifies as indigenous. In their description of this population they emphasize the "social complexity" of the Lacandon due to the development of "capitalist relations" (Ascencio Franco & Leyva Solano, 1990:22). They state:

> The population has a profile that is pluri-cultural, unified and at the same time characterized by diversity....[The Lacandon is] a multi-ethnic setting and cradle of a new ethnicity in the context of frontier politics, jungle colonization, struggle for land, diversity of religious options and *campesino* militancy. (1990:23)

DEVELOPMENT IN THE HIGHLANDS:

Economic Differentiation & Class Consciousness

Collier (1994:116-124) also notes the socio-cultural effect of capitalist accumulation and development on the highland indigenous communities, as well as the significant fact of growing economic differentiation. The growth of class-based relationships is "articulated intergenerationally" within the more traditional and ethnically differentiated highland village groupings:

> ...participation in the global economy brought new opportunities even as it undermined the agricultural basis of peasant life and created an unprecedented gap between rich and poor in peasant communities. (Collier, 1994:89)

The changes, he emphasizes, are related to the increasing economic integration of some *campesinos* into national and international markets (1994:90). Collier illustrates how energy development (oil and hydro-electric) in the southeast in the 1970s, drew peasants into relatively high wage work. When these workers returned with newly acquired skills in construction, familiarity with the Spanish language and *ladino* culture [11], and accumulated capital, they became a new economic and political force in the traditional villages. This led to the transformation of agricultural practices and a reconfiguration of the socio-political landscape in various parts of the highlands. This phenomenon subsequently, contributed to a polarization within indigenous communities between "haves" and "have-nots", creating a new class of local power broker (the *cacique*), whose power is derived from this "temporary insertion" into the capitalist economy (Collier, 1994:19; Nations, 1994). The *caciques* generated considerable opposition because of their close alliance with the state-party and eventual monopolization of community resources.

A HISTORY OF EXCLUSIONARY POLITICS AND COOPTATION: Land Reform

The essence of Chiapan politics is its strong sentiment of localism and regionalism. This was combined with, a regional struggle between traditional, highland, conservative, landowners, and liberal, anti-clerical, modernizing elites of the central valley, for control over indigenous labor and resources (Benjamin, 1989: Prologue). Another related, central political theme has been the attempt of central government authority to consolidate control over the state in order to impose reforms on the landed elites (*latifundistas*) for the purpose of

[11] *Ladino* is often used colloquially along with *mestizo* to mean non-indigenous but it also has a socio-cultural meaning especially amongst the indigenous. Jacinto Arias, one of the few Chiapas Mayan scholars suggests that it should not be confused with *mestizo* because it is more than a racial distinction. He considers a *ladino* to be the result of a process of acculturation towards the dominant Spanish ideals. Once the culture is adopted therefore, a *ladino* is someone who no longer belongs to an indigenous group. He conceives it as describing the opposition between the Spanish and Indian cultures (Arias, 1975:7).

modernizing the economy. The new "revolutionary" central government aimed at expanding commercial agriculture in the overall context of modernizing the national economy.

The indigenous in Chiapas often became pawns caught between rival political forces; although not hapless as their history of rebelliousness testifies (Harvey, 1994:4). Nevertheless, until the 1970s they were a deeply fragmented sector; a tightly controlled agricultural labor force which resulted, for example, in their limited participation in the Revolutionary War (1910-17) and their political and social exclusion in the so-called closed corporate communities.

Rus claims, "Indians were excluded from this revolution. More than excluded, they were mistreated by both sides..." (Rus, 1994:265). Hence, according to Benjamin, in 1914 when the revolutionary army finally invaded Chiapas:

> Chiapas experienced the "effects of the Revolution," but was not itself revolutionized. To avoid a bloody "caste war", Mexican revolutionaries and their Chiapanecan allies, remembering Pajarito and 1911 did not dare mobilize peasants to overthrow the old social order and advance the goals of the Revolution.[12] Paternalistic reform, not popular mobilization, characterized the official Mexican Revolution in Chiapas." (Benjamin, 1989: 119)

Thus in Chiapas until the Cárdenas reforms in 1938 incorporated a broad cross-section of Mexicans into the state-party, the politics of regionalism and localism remained strong. In the 1920s in Chiapas, the Revolution had turned into a civil war between those who accepted an accord with the new central government in order to gain power, and those who did not.[13] The

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[12] El Pajarito refers to a Chamulan *cacique* who recruited an Indian army to support a 1911 revolt of the San Cristóbal landed elite against rival landowners in Tuxtla Gutiérrez and the central valley. In several instances the indian recruits in revenge, turned against some highland landlords creating the fear of a generalized indigenous revolt (Benjamin, 1989:189).

[13] Benjamin describes the confusing scene in Chiapas of shifting allegiances both during and after the Revolution in Chiapas. The national government's project to consolidate central authority in Chiapas ultimately provoked alliances based on preserving landowner control over regional politics and nipping in the bud the rise of "class conflict". Compromises between the regional elites of the highland (San Cristóbal) and lowland (central valley, Tuxtla Gutiérrez) forces were struck after 1917 which achieved relative peace amongst the traditionally competitive oligarchies. Curiously the anti-revolutionary force known as "the *Mapaches*" was composed of small frontier ranch and farm owners while many of the traditional large landowners aligned themselves with the invading forces of the revolutionary leader Venustiana Carranza. The peasants were never mobilized again by either side. The outcome-"The unity of the Central Valley was shattered in 1914 by an invading army of a distant revolution. Some *finqueros* (farm owners) and *rancheros* (ranch owners) of *tierra caliente* (lowlands), primarily those near Tuxtla Gutiérrez, accepted the new order and made it their own, benefiting from modernizing capitalist

forces against agrarian reform hence, unified formerly competing large landowners who used their newly won state authority to preserve their privilege and block agrarian reform. For example, governor Tiburcio Fernandez Ruiz (1920-24), representing this faction, established the legal framework in Chiapas for agrarian reform, setting the limit of 8,000 hectares as the maximum size for a private property. Further, the landowner who exceeded these limits was granted the right to choose which lands to dispose of, and the right also, to sell it. Reyes Ramos states:

> In this way the state eluded its obligation to expropriate and redistribute without payment, the lands of *latifundistas*, converting the acquisition of land into a relationship of buyers and sellers between landowners and peasants. (1992:48)

Consequently, the landowners also kept control over the best, and most productive lands.

Yet despite the lack of organized rebellion by *campesinos*, indigenous and agricultural workers, the post-revolutionary period in Chiapas witnessed their politicization. The power brokers moreover, saw the political utility of limited and strategic reform, successfully demobilizing worker and peasant movements and this kept their organizations fragmented and their revolutionary gains limited (Benjamin, 1989:143). The ability of the indigenous/ *campesinos* to influence even local economic decisions however, remained tenuous and sporadic. In fact, the politics of regional oligarchies, and the mediation of local political bosses and power brokers (*caciques*), managed to preserve a quasi-feudal style of power based on patron-client relationships. This political control maintains the interests of large landowners and modernizing political and agri-business elites (Harvey:1994). Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the outcomes of the revolutionary promise of agrarian reform in Chiapas.

The effective politico-economic exclusion of the peasantry, led to the belief among the Maya that the "real" revolution only took place in the late 1930s, the reform era of Lázaro Cárdenas (Rus,1994:266). He won the favor of the *campesino* population by finally implementing a substantial land redistribution. Cárdenas distributed three times as much land

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ctd.13 - ... reforms. Others, landowners from the more isolated reaches of the Central Valley and the highlands, resisted the invaders and their reforms and eventually came to power [in the 1920s]" (Benjamin, 1989:119-143).

as all his predecessors and more irrigated land than anyone before or after him (Barry, 1992:155). His development strategy aimed at increasing agricultural production in order to provide cheap food to urban Mexican workers. The workers would then be the foundation for his policy for industrializing the country. Cárdenas moreover, institutionalized the corporate form of state-party dominance and control designed to coopt future peasant dissent. This structure called the National Peasant Confederation (CNC) blocked independent peasant organizing in Chiapas for over thirty years. Most importantly, it allowed the governments succeeding Cárdenas to limit agrarian reform yet still preserve social peace. The peace in the countryside and the party support achieved in this way however, was slowly eroded by a number of factors.

The land distributed was the most marginal in terms of quality of soil and availability of water. The bureaucratic structures and processes set up to administer reform were slow, cumbersome, and frequently corrupt at the local levels. Local and regional officials thus, were unable and often unwilling to process peasant's entitlements expeditiously. This created a huge backlog of petitions called the *rezago agrario* that persists even today.[14] For instance, María Eugenia Reyes Ramos documents numerous cases of land petitions in Chiapas not resolved from 20 to 53 years after the process was initiated (1992:102). She describes a procedure where-"...32 documents must be completed, and 22 different entities...", from the President of Mexico and Governor of the state to various bureaucratic agencies are involved in the final decree of entitlement. The average time-span in Chiapas is seven years and three months (1992:102). The peasantry's insecurity of tenure, and the freedom of elites to manipulate the process, have been one of the major sources of continuous conflict between both contending *campesino* claimants and, between *campesinos* and large landowners. Governments have used the former type of conflicts to successfully to coopt and divide peasants while the latter cases are frequently dealt with through state supported violence with impunity for the perpetrators. It

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[14] Reyes Ramos defines *rezago agraria* as the backlog of petitions for land that have not been resolved through the process established to reach a final entitlement (1992:101).

is the direct cause of the large number of land invasions in the years since land redistribution was attempted.

After Cárdenas there was a major shift in agricultural policy toward the promotion of, and support to, large-scale, privately owned commercial agriculture. The state-party however, maintained its agrarian populist rhetoric after 1940 but at the same time implemented effective counterreforms. For example, during the Miguel Aleman administration (1946-52), the concept of *amparo agrario* (agrarian protection) was introduced putting beyond expropriation and redistribution, large tracts of the best lands. "Small landholder" is the official legal terminology for all private landowners (Barry, 1992:160). A generous definition of small landholder thus was created, which in the case of some ranches protected up to 50,000 hectares of land from redistribution (1992:155). *Latifundistas* found another way to preserve their excessively large holdings by dividing them into sections and legally putting the subdivided lands in the name of relatives and others they trusted.

A prime example of the protection given to large land holders by government are certificates of non-affectability. This legal devise protects specified lands against expropriation and redistribution. Presidents following Cárdenas gradually nullified much of his intended redistribution in this way. The practice was greatly accelerated by the de la Madrid administration (1982-88) when 75 percent of the total number of certificates since 1934 were issued (Harvey, 1990:191). In Chiapas, during the state administration of Governor Castellanos (1982-88), private ranchers in Chiapas received 4,714 certificates, equivalent to making 70 percent of the area ranchers occupy, legally protected against agrarian reform (Harvey, 1994:23).

Among political actors in Chiapas, the role of *cacique* is also a crucial factor in understanding the dynamics of local and regional socio-political peasant action. The *cacique* in indigenous communities has a number of historical antecedents. The local authority structure, the *cacigazgo* (spheres of influence and control) and the closed corporate communities (Benjamin, 1989:23), were first imposed on indigenous communities during the colonial period to keep the Spanish and indigenous demographically isolated from each other but still under

colonial authority. This was achieved by coopting Indian elites with property, privileged status, personal exemption from tribute and labor service, and sometimes formal education (Rus, 1994:267). The *caciques*, at first drawn from the traditional politico-religious leadership, were expected to serve the Crown, ensuring tribute and easy access to Indian labor (1994:20). Until the Cárdenas era, this structure privileged the closed corporate community and paradoxically, the maintenance of indigenous culture and heritage (1994:20).

Later on though, this role would be fulfilled by younger men, returned from working in the *ladino* world. Similarly, bilingual school teachers and scribes, because of their ability as go-betweens with Spanish speaking officials, eventually assumed positions of authority both traditional and institutional, as power brokers. Rus describes these as scribe-"*principales*".[15] The institutionalization of bilingual representatives in Indian communities as a part of government administrative "reform" was a key cooptational mechanism of the post revolutionary period.

Cárdenas, wishing to subject Chiapas to central government authority, enact agrarian and economic reforms opposed by *latifundistas* (large landowners), and ensure control over the rural vote, further refined, institutionalized, and modernized this system of local authority, paving the way for the entry of government agencies such as National Indigenous Institute-INI (Instituto Nacional Indigenista) (Rus, 1994:267). Rus describes the social effects of the system of *caciques*:

> Farther reaching than the scribe-*principales*' individual political and economic roles, however, was the way they changed the meaning of native leadership and tradition. Whereas before 1936 the structures of the "corporate community" had helped to preserve a safe haven from *ladino* control and exploitation, by the second half of the 1950s those structures, through the agency of the scribe-*principales*, had been co-opted by the state and incorporated into its system of control in such a way that much of the time they actually served its interests as against those of the Indians. The meaning of tradition had been stood on its head. (1994:293)

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[15] Scribe refers to their ability to read and especially write, therefore giving them the capacity to deal with government and legal documents. *Principales* are holders of one of the positions in the traditional hierachial system of authority within Mayan indigenous communities called the cargo system.

Consequently, the *cacique* became a major focus of rural political dissent. Their ability to link the rural communities to the ruling party fostered "entrepreneurship" and corruption in the administration of government benefits e.g. construction contracts for government-funded projects and government licences creating monopolies in the provision of transportation or sale of soft drinks and alcohol. This added fuel to rural opposition and popular discontent in the 1970s and '80s. Rus (1994:300) surmises that:

> By the mid-1970s, more than half the *municipios* of the highlands had active opposition movements. And by the early 1980s, the expedient of expelling political opponents had spread from Chamula[16] to those communities, generating thousands of exiles who, in turn, founded dozens of new colonies in San Cristóbal and the Lacandon jungle. In all of these, and, by this time less openly, even inside the traditional *municipios* themselves, the effort to define new, "posttraditional" forms of community that would be truer to the Indians' own developing sense of themselves continues to this day.

THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL ORGANIZING IN CHIAPAS:

Towards a Politics of Inclusion

Two historical events firmly established the Mexican peasantry as a political constituency; the 1910-1917 Revolution in Mexico and the land reforms of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940) (Benjamin:143). The 1994 Chiapas Rebellion, in large part, is an expression of the historical exclusion of the peasantry from participation in the national and regional political economy.

In contrast, the new Zapatistas' political project and discourse is pluri-ethnic and inclusive. Thus it calls on, not only the indigenous and *campesinos*, but also the whole of civil society, to mobilize in support of social change. The intention is to create a counterforce from below

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[16] PRI-affiliated *caciques* since the early 1970s have exiled thousands of Protestant converts and some progressive Catholics on the pretext that they challenge customary practices (alcohol consumption and voting for the opposition) that attack tradition and the cohesion of the community. These people have been deprived of their lands and possessions and physically attacked. They have formed squatter settlements around San Cristóbal and other urban centres or have founded colonies on *ejidal* land in the Lacandon. In the many cases these exiles belong to opposition parties like the PRD, which is considered to be one of the underlying political not religious reasons for their expulsion. It is estimated that between 15,000 and 20,000 have now been expelled from their homes. Political and legal authorities have done nothing to address their grievances or punish the offenders (Collier, 1994:138-39).

using a "reverse" or counter- hegemonic discourse that challenges the state-party system and its mechanisms of cooptation and control. A broadbased collective consciousness is being built on the necessity for radical political transformation to address the failure of the Revolutionary promise of social justice and democracy.

The advent of peasant politicization in Chiapas in the 1920s (Benjamin,1989:96) was stalled by the support Cárdenas won through the incorporation of agrarian reform movements into the CNC and the official party in 1938. Effective social peace in the countryside coincided with this "penetration of the national government into the states and the localities of Mexico..."(1989:186). The Cárdenas regime successfully coopted the organizing "masses" into an institutional alliance by reorganizing the revolutionary party of the state into a "party of social corporations" (1989:196).

Along with these institutional innovations came an intensification of rural reform that led to a further demobilization of the agrarian workforce creating communities that were "grateful to the state for land, dependent on it for credit and markets, and were less concerned about class solidarity and struggle" (1989:197) This diminished the importance of the state government in the succeeding three decades, and according to Benjamin, it became an arm of the national government concerned with "administering national policies rather than defending and promoting regional priorities" (1989:201).

These political moves also inserted another mechanism of control into the countryside in the form of government agencies charged with overseeing and implementing agrarian reform. These bureaucratic bodies even became competitive with the local and regional *cacigazgos* mediating peasant demands, at first opening new channels for clientelistic gains but eventually providing a new structure for corruption and inefficiency in the administration of central government development policies (Gates:1994). The final outcome of the competing forces of cooptation and channels of mediation contributed to the central government's loss of legitimacy, particularly where its greatest strength existed--rural Mexico.

The political landscape in Chiapas today is in the throes of a profound change that dates from the early 1970s when the rural sector began to organize independently again on a massive

scale. This organizing intensified after the oil-debt crises of 1982 and erupted in a prolonged rebellion in 1994. Collier dates this period of intense social organizing from 1974 when:

> ...the state governor asked Bishop Samuel Ruiz to organize an Indigenous Congress commemorating the birth of Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, the sixteenth-century champion of Indian rights. The purpose of this congress was two-fold. On one hand, the Catholic Church, exercising what it called its "preferential option for the poor," wanted to give voice to the sufferings of Indians; the government, on the other hand, wanted to create a more populist image after brutally repressing the student movement of the late 1960s (1994:61).

This conference became an extension of the consciousness raising work the Church was doing in the rural areas since the 1960s through its network of catechists (indigenous, lay preachers, trained in the diocese according to the methodology of liberation theology). Collier claims the Indigenous Congress, with its grassroots character, and focus on Indian solutions to Indian defined problems, "provided a model of bottom-up organizing upon which independent peasant organizations subsequently drew" (1994:63). Moreover, the pastoral work of the catechists continued afterwards with follow-up meetings with indigenous community representatives, building "a base for popular participation" which even included the screening of a film of the event in the communities, thereby greatly expanding consciousness raising outward to the communities. Harvey notes the effect this meeting had on its participants: "Whereas conflicts had previously been understood in terms of personal relations, the participants in the Congress began to see the broader structural forces at work" (1994:29).

Additionally, the 1970s, Harvey points out, saw the struggle for land renewed with vigour, taking on a new dynamic in the context of the legalization, by populist president Luis Echeverría (1970-76), of certain kinds of independent peasant organizations e.g. the unions of *ejidos* (Harvey, 1994:30). This policy was meant to improve marketing and production in small-scale agriculture through collectivization and massive government supports of credit and technical assistance using these unions as administrative units (1994:31). It was also intended to bypass the corrupt control over government resources by middlemen such as *caciques* and corrupt government agencies. This opportunity however, combined with political education at

the grassroots, resulted instead in the growth of an organized government opposition which continued to develop and refine the political skills necessary to challenge state neglect and corruption. Land reform not unpredictably, came to a virtual standstill after Echeverria's *sexenio* (six year term) which became a touchstone for peasant mobilization and social action in the 1970s and '80s.

Peasant organizing was also influenced at this time by not only the Church, but also a number of leftist groups from the north who shortly after the student massacre of 1968, entered the Lacandon in small brigades seeking to build bases of popular power amongst *ejidatarios* in the Lacandon. Harvey claims, the weaker presence of government institutions in the remote settler areas cleared the way for political and religious groups in helping to organize autonomous forms of peasant representation especially in the Lacandon (Harvey, 1994:30).

Meanwhile, "The familiar pattern of political bargaining between state and sectors of civil society" (Harvey,1993:200) continued to erode due to economic restructuring and austerity of the 1980s. After 1982, Mexico faced a severe economic crisis caused by the sudden drop in the world price for oil and a consequent insurmountable external debt. The Mexican government responded to the World Bank's prescriptions with austerity in social spending and privatization of government enterprises, as a condition for loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to meet its foreign creditors' demands. Along with this came the introduction of neoliberal economic policies beginning with the de la Madrid administration (1982-88), aiming once more, at modernizing agriculture and opening the economy to increased flows of international investment and trade.

In Chiapas, agricultural credit dried up, the prices of the basic cash crop, coffee, and subsistence crops, maize and beans, continuously dropped with the withdrawal of subsidies. Eventually markets became saturated with imported grains in the early 1990s (Harvey, 1994:6). The bulk of government support to small-scale, peasant agriculture gradually was withdrawn. The Chiapan peasantry was devastated.

For example, an important government marketing structure for Chiapan coffee producers (the majority being small scale growers), INMECAFE (Instituto Nacional Mexicano del

Cafe-National Mexican Coffee Institute) was established in 1958 and privatized in 1989. Its central role was to organize and finance coffee production and provide marketing, research and technical support to small producers. This move along with the drop in the world price for coffee eventually put the majority of growers out of business. Overall, productivity and total output in the peasant sector fell by approximately 35 percent between 1989 and 1993, and a 70 percent drop in income resulted in the same period (*La Jornada*, Jan 23/94, Mexico D.F.:p.47)

Increasingly, the effectiveness of clientelistic representation dwindled as neoliberal economic reforms were implemented in the 1980s and 90s, weakening the PRI's rural political support delivered through its local and regional political channels (Harvey, 1990:183). During this period of rapid economic deterioration in peasant agriculture, the political elite increasingly had to resort to the numerous forms of repression at its disposal to maintain "social peace" and "stability". Human rights organizations document illegal arrest and detention, use of armed government bodies and para-military groups called *guardias blancas* (white guards), human rights abuses such as torture, dispossession of land, destruction of property, harassment, threats and outright assassination of peasant leaders and sympathizers.[17]

Political events and economic crises, particularly from the 1970s onwards, then, mark a transitional period in state-peasant relations in Chiapas and coincides with the rise in indigenous and peasant mobilization through independent, principally, non-party affiliated *campesino* organizations (Harvey, 1990:184). These organizations proliferated outside the mould established by the government for unions of *ejidos*, making alliances with national groups, joining together on a regional basis, and making contacts and alliances with other sectors such as teachers. Furthermore, social action became much more confrontational as the ability of these groups to mobilize in greater numbers increased.

A significant challenge to the legitimacy of the state-party system therefore, arose from these organizations and grew in strength and numbers as the limited national support to peasant agriculture faltered under economic restructuring, moving government policy further away

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[17] See human rights reports cited in Chapter 1, page 21 for this period.

from the reality of the peasantry's own development strategies which focus on subsistence and self-sufficiency. NAFTA was the final proof that the government had abandoned its agrarian constituency in favor of an international economic project which signals "a death threat to the indigenous" (Marcos speech, Jan.1/94, San Cristóbal). Anthropologists June Nash and Kathleen Sullivan liken this current period of peasant-State relations to a "return to *porfirismo*", the brutal dictatorship from 1876-1910, that crushed peasant rights to land and fomented the Revolution in an earlier attempt at liberal modernization of the economy at the expense of the peasantry (Nash & Sullivan, 1992:13).

LIBERAL DEMOCRACY: or A New Way of Doing Politics?

The electoral process in Chiapas currently is a particularly potent illustration of the exclusionary nature of Mexican politics. The International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development (ICFHRDD) in its report on the August 1994 elections in Mexico states:

> It is common knowledge that the party [the PRI] has resorted to election shams whenever they have been deemed necessary. To attain their goals the PRI and its supporters use all their imagination and initiative, coupled with total disregard for legality: stuffing boxes with previously marked ballots; stealing and destroying ballot boxes, having individuals vote many times; buying votes; and altering results at every turn, from local polls to the national level. Such activity reached new heights in the 1988 presidential election. (October 1994 Report of ICFHRDD, Montreal:p.2)

Chiapans are extremely cynical about the electoral process for the reasons noted above and this has contributed to a form of anti-party rhetoric and non party political forms of organizing highlighted in Zapatista discourse with its emphasis on civil society as a change agent.

In response to the Revolutionary Democratic Party's (PRD) attempts to mobilize support for itself from the ranks of EZLN sympathizers, Marcos denounced the whole system of party politics in Mexico, including the leading opposition party of the centre-left led by Cuahutémoc Cárdenas (Speech by Marcos, May 17, 1994). In the Third Declaration of the Lacandon, 2

January 1995, the Zapatista discourse clarifies their stand on the efficacy of party politics in creating political change:

> Knowing that elections are not, in the current conditions, the road to democratic change, the EZLN accepted being put to one side in order to give legal political opposition forces the opportunity to struggle. The EZLN pledged its work and its effort, then, to seeking a peaceful transition to democracy. In the National Democratic Convention the EZLN sought a civic and peaceful force. One which, without opposing the electoral process, would also not be consumed by it, and that would seek new forms of struggle which would include more democratic sectors in Mexico as well as linking itself with democratic movements in other parts of the world. August 21 ended the illusions of an immediate change through peaceful means. An electoral process that is corrupt, immoral unfair and illegitimate culminated in a new mockery of the good will of the citizens. The party-state system reaffirmed its antidemocratic vocation and imposed, in all parts and at all levels, its arrogance. (Third Declaration of the Lacandon, Jan 2/95, *La Jornada*, Mexico D.F.)

The main thrust of mobilizations around the EZLN and its demands for democratization and structural change, thus have been through civic and independent peasant groups, non-governmental organizations, students and teachers unions, politically unaffiliated intellectual groups and newly formed fronts including a parallel government and popular assemblies at the community and state level in Chiapas. These organized groups oppose, and have deposed, recent "legally" elected officials in Chiapas.

Significantly, the opposition candidate for governor of Chiapas in the August 1994 election, "officially" won 38 percent of the vote, did not represent, and was not a member of the PRD, yet he ran under the party's banner because of the prohibition of independent candidates under Mexican law. Amado Avendaño Figueroa made clear in his campaign literature that he was not committed to any national or state party platform, but he addressed himself solely to the electorate as a candidate of civil society whose specific goal was the formation of a Constituent Assembly. This body would design a new constitution, creating the conditions for a transition to democracy (Avendaño campaign pamphlet, June, 1994, San Cristóbal). The rejection of party politics is another key element of the "reverse discourse" of the new Zapatistas born out of years of fruitless efforts, frustrations and reprisals arising, out of, and from, the conventional party system.

The popular socio-cultural profile of the indigenous/*campesino* of Chiapas then, although it is characterized by diversity and multi-ethnicity derives a unity that is historically situated in struggles over land, the dignity of peasant labor and the quest for basic human rights. Their cultural symbols and social organizations have been derived from threats of extinction embodied in the hegemony of political and economic elites who sought to control their resources and their labor.

Mexico's miraculous "political stability" was maintained through the tension produced between the Revolutionary rhetoric of reform and the peasant culture of resistance. The long held out promise of liberal pluralistic democracy, civil rights, agrarian reform, and social justice, the embodiment of the "populist pact" is being seriously re-evaluated by the peasantry in the light of the actual benefits that contemporary development strategies have brought to the majority in Chiapas. The forces favoring radical change today in Chiapas therefore, are cross-cut by national and international political and economic issues and deeply influenced by the question of ethnicity. This makes the political landscape of Chiapas a very fragmented one indeed.

The politics of exclusion is being challenged through a "reverse discourse". It is a discourse about a democratic utopia and it has been given moral force by the sacrifice of lives, the positive and supportive responses of civil society and the institutional decay that party politics represents in Mexico today. The populist pact, irrevocably broken by the modification to Article 27 of the Constitution in 1992, has decreed that land transfer henceforth, will become a market transaction, and not an entitlement conferred by the State as before. This is a powerful symbol of the ultimate break with the revolutionary tradition of agrarian reform and fuels the already boiling social unrest in the Chiapan countryside.

Combined with the increasing ineffectiveness of the patron-clientelist relationships because of austerity and economic restructuring, a collective identity arises out of hopelessness and abandonment, and in its extreme manifestation has led to armed revolt. The new Zapatistas have strategically extended this consciousness to a large segment of Mexican civil society by

using modern communication techniques. Furthermore they possess moral authority in a political system lacking legitimacy for a large segment of the population.

The next chapter examines some of the elements of a new way of doing politics; the alternative and experimental structures that people in Chiapas have built to initiate a transition to democracy. It also portrays the difficulty in separating the socio-political structures of civil society from the official and traditional political sphere. This conundrum is highlighted by the approaches of Chiapans locally, regionally and nationally to non party politics and the fragmentation of social forces that typically occurs in social movements.

CHAPTER 5

CIVIL SOCIETY UNMASKED: SOCIAL ACTION AND RADICAL DEMOCRACY

"What I propose is that today in Latin America the dominated masses are generating new social practices founded on reciprocity, equality and collective solidarity as well as on individual liberties and the democracy of collectively agreed upon decisions against external impositions....Latin America, because of its peculiar history, because of its place in the trajectory of modernity, is the most apt historical terrain to achieve the articulation of what until now has been separated: the happiness of collective solidarity and that of a full individual realization. We do not have to give up either of them, because both are our genuine history." (Quijano, 1988:68 cited in Escobar, 1994:69)

This chapter analyzes the terrain of social action in Chiapas in a timeframe from 1993 to 1996. It focuses on key social actors and organizations of civil society involved in different levels of activity from the local to the international. The analysis examines the "fit" between field observations, and recent theories of social movements and civil society. It also compares the coincidence of the discourse of the EZLN and its allies with the emergence of insurgent consciousness in social organizations attempting to unify around a new discourse about democratic development. This exceedingly fluid and dynamic process of social creation and experimentation is conceived of by its participants as a model for a new way of doing politics.

The rural sector in civil society and sympathetic urban groups greatly expanded organizational efforts with respect to human rights and demands for democratic transformation after the Rebellion. Other key points of organizational expansion correspond with two post-electoral periods in the summer-fall of 1994 and the fall-winter of 1995 and finally, the period after the February 1995 government action against the Zapatistas. This is a very uneven process, with periods of fragmentation, apparent disinterest or weariness due to competing interests and especially the necessity for survival, fear of repression and war, and frequently, government cooptation and counter insurgency strategies.

This chapter, hence, is a very partial and preliminary analysis because of the unstable and changing nature of the organizations described, and their relatively recent character. It is a

provisional attempt to situate and describe the role that civil society, especially in Chiapas, is playing within the context of broader processes of profound social change in Mexico today.

In the current scenario, changes frequently occur suddenly, political and social actors come and go[1], violence erupts, tension rises and falls, alliances are broken, while people try to continue with their daily tasks of survival. Nevertheless, there are moments when peace and social justice appear to be just around the corner and the solidarity of so-called civil society is palpable. Escobar writing of Latin America in general, characterizes the potential power of civil society as:

> Often working at the margins and in the fissures of peripheral capitalism, social actors of various kinds take space away from capitalism and modernity, and they hint at different ways of seeing the relationships between capital, the state, culture, and the economy. They may well offer important insights for the redefinition of democracy and development. (Escobar, 1992:68)

EZLN discourse expresses the hope that indeed, this will be the outcome of the process which it frequently spearheads.

All the social actors I observed in the field identify themselves as being outside the political sphere and thus, are considered to be constituents of civil society. Furthermore, none belong to the military organization calling itself the EZLN. However, all sympathize with the Zapatista movement and have adopted their discourse, even though not all identify themselves as a civilian arm of the Zapatista movement nor closely align themselves and their groups with EZLN strategies and tactics.

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[1] An example of this is the arrest and detention for three months of Jorge Santiago, director of the NGO DESMI (Desarrollo Economico-Social de los Mexicanos Indígenas-Socio-Economic Development of Mexican Indigenous People) and the voluntary exile for six months of a key community activist from the community being observed. The lengthy (first Dialogue beginning in Feb/94-ending Mar 3/94, second Dialogue Apr/95 and on-going until Sept/96), stop-and-go, and fruitless nature of peace talks with the government has also deeply influenced peoples' organizational responses to the conflict. Civil society's role changed with the circumstances from overtly political to social and humanitarian sometimes responding to government initiatives or the lack of them e.g. broken ceasefire line, provision of aid to internal refugees from the conflict zone, promoting and organizing aspects of the peace Dialogues, the church's role as conciliator and mediator or protagonist. Finally, some *campesino*/indigenous organizations who early in the conflict, and during the pre and post election period, were focused on broader political issues e.g. transition to democracy, respecting the vote, autonomy, justice etc., by 1996, tended to shift to more immediate social concerns like resolving land claims on occupied land, family welfare, the displaced population and the perceived immanence of war and repression.

FAILED ELECTIONS: Prophetic Early Movements

In 1988 when Anibal Quijano published this chapter's opening quotation, a coalition of left of centre parties and disaffected reformers from the PRI almost toppled the state-party and its candidate for president, Carlos Salinas de Gortari. The National Democratic Front (Frente Democratico Nacional-FDN), now known as the Revolutionary Democratic Party (Partido Revolucionario Democrático-PRD), is headed by Cuahutémoc Cárdenas, the son of legendary reformer Lázaro Cárdenas.

The "perfect dictatorship" as a consequence of this electoral event, was unmasked once more as an authoritarian, corrupt and undemocratic structure. This electoral event represents the largest mobilization of civil society in Mexico against the government since the Revolution.

It is hardly surprising that Mexicans' cynicism about the legitimacy of the political system was reinforced when a massive electronic fraud was detected and finally proven. It was perpetrated during the counting of the vote by the governing party's electoral apparatus (Reding, 1988:623-24). This act ensured the success of Salinas just as it appeared that Cárdenas was about to defeat him. In the eyes of the existing, civilian, pro-democracy movement born out of the struggles of the 1960s, President Salinas became a usurper while opposition parties were perceived as too weak and ineffective to successfully challenge the monolithic state-party.

Zapatista discourse directly challenged the Salinas government's legitimacy. The EZLN initially demanded the resignation of "usurper" Salinas de Gortari as a condition for a ceasefire and peaceful negotiations. Secondly, in its discourse on democratic practice, the EZLN places civil society in the centre as the major protagonist of social and political change. Institutionalized political parties and the electoral process are thus, pushed aside and legitimacy becomes the function of civil society.

The 1970s in Chiapas saw the rapid rise of a politically independent peasant movement focusing initially on collectively using legal channels to redress historical grievances; land and civil rights. After the violent backlash in the 1980s by the state representing the interests of

landowners in Chiapas who opted for state-sanctioned repression, peasant "politics" became more confrontational. Added to the conflict between peasants and landowners was the subsequent economic decline in the countryside making the peasantry even worse off materially. Social activists in desperation, gradually adopted more radical strategies including civil resistance, using mass mobilizations and marches, roadblocks, takeovers of public buildings, hostage-taking, and the occupation of land to push their demands. Their power to mobilize and their organizational skill increased with each new crisis but most importantly, what was manifested in those two decades was a commitment to collective action, solidarity and renewed resistance that crossed social sectors and ethnic groupings, and began to focus more and more on the issue of democratic development both inside and outside its own structures.

The introduction of the neoliberal project in Mexico, occurred during the presidency of Miguel de la Madrid (1982-88). It intensified the urgency and collective consciousness of the peasant movement in the southeast, especially after two largely symbolic events in 1992: the commemoration of the quincentenary of the "discovery of the Americas" and the constitutional modification to Article 27 blocking future land reforms. Thus, as economic despair grew, hoped for change dwindled, and impunity allowed repression to remain unchecked by the legal structures, a significant part of the indigenous-*campesino* sector in Chiapas eventually opted for armed struggle in 1994. Other sympathetic sectors redoubled their organizational efforts to achieve a transition to democracy aiming at dislodging the PRI's hold on government in the 1994 presidential election.

CIVIL SOCIETY IN THEORY: The Foundation of "True" Democracy

Noted historian of Chiapas, Antonio García de Léon, claims that the roots of the term civil society come from the "genesis of capitalism, the first century of modernity itself, and the original globalization: the 17th century". Gramsci's concept of "civil society" contrasts with its

original meaning as a counterpoint to "natural society" (feudal society), the supposed antecedent to "the State" (García de Léon, 1996: *La Jornada*, March 1996, Mexico D.F.:8)

According to García de Léon, in Gramsci's theory of civil society, the civil and the private are counterposed to the public, and in the final instance, to the political. Social change is seen to happen through "the strengthening of civil society defined as a grouping of individuals and private organizations that can substitute for the "State" during critical times where the State is not functioning because of "structural crises" (García de Léon:8). In this conception, civil society opposes political society which is composed of bureaucrats, planners, economists, administrators, and professional politicians who support the domination of the capitalist state and disguise its most destructive features.

The new Zapatistas enshrined the radical democratic principle of Gramsci's civil society in their First Declaration from the *Selva Lacandona*:

> PEOPLE OF MEXICO: We, men and women, upright and free, are conscious that the war we now declare is a last resort, but it is also just. The dictatorship has been waging a non-declared genocidal war against our communities for many years. We now ask for your committed participation and support for this plan of the people of Mexico who struggle for work, land, housing food, health, education, independence, liberty, democracy, justice, and peace....(First Declaration of the CCRI-CG of the EZLN, December 1993, Chiapas)

In Gramsci's "ideal state" García de Léon argues, both poles, the civil and the political, are in equilibrium and political parties mediate between the two. Disequilibrium occurs during periods of crisis with relation to the State, political parties then "contract" in their influence (García de Léon:8).

LOCAL SOCIAL ACTION: Civil Society, the Base for a Transition

New social movement theorists emphasize the importance of analyzing the elements of a movement at the grassroots. Constructing an "action system" (Escobar, 1994:72) like the Zapatista National Liberation Army or the non-combative movement which will be described

below, is what Melucci refers to as a "collective identity", (Melucci, 1989) and resource mobilization theorists identify as "insurgent consciousness" (McAdam, 1982).

According to Elizabeth Jelin, everyday life is "a field for construction of democracy" (Jelin cited in Escobar, 1992:70) and further that, "daily life and social movements are privileged spaces in which to study" how processes of mediation occur between political practice in daily life and institutionalized politics. Elizabeth Jelin argues that "social movements are situated, at least in theory, in the intermediate space between individualized, familiar, habitual, micro-climactic daily life, and socio-political processes writ large of the State and the institutions, solemn and superior" (Jelin, 1987:11).

The people of the Chiapas countryside and small town county seats like Ococingo, Altamirano, Palenque and Las Margaritas where control over government resources to rural areas is situated, in 1988 voted 90 percent in favor of the ruling party (Reding,1994:20)[2] Reding insists this indicates the level of control over the vote the ruling party exercises in the countryside. This changed dramatically in 1994 when the PRI candidate for state governor won only 50 percent of the vote while the candidate of civil society Amado Avendaño won 38 percent. Within days of the election, action plans for civil resistance were circulated, a call to protest what was considered by many to be yet another fraudulent victory for the state-party.[3] Many local struggles and issues revolve around the power and corruption of *presidentes municipales* (governing authority of a *municipio*), their impunity (protection from legal

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[2] Andrew Reding relates that in Chiapas in the 1991 federal elections, the PRI won 100 percent of the vote in 50 *municipios* and was "strongest in the area affected by the insurrection. In the ninth Congressional District, which includes Ocosingo and two other towns occupied by the Zapatistas, the PRI received 100 percent of all votes cast in 10 of the district's 19 *municipios*." He feels this is indicative of fraud and the control and manipulation of *caciques* through threats and violence towards any who support the opposition (1994:17).

[3] These allegations were rife amongst Chiapan social organizations and supporters of the opposition. In September 1994 the Chiapan Peoples Democratic Assembly (AEDPCH) established an independent civilian commission called the Procuraduria Electoral del Pueblo Chiapaneco-Chiapan Peoples' Electoral Commission, to gather complaints of fraud and manipulation throughout the state. It was headed by movie star and social and political activist Ofelia Medina. The commission collected reports of irregularities in more than half of the polling stations listing 117 ways fraud was committed from the most numerous complaints of illegal trafficking in ballots, 1,007, to 424 cases of buying of votes, threats or pressure, 420 cases of multiple or unlawful voting to, 37 acts of violence and aggression against voters. (*Proceso*, # 940, Nov 7/94:12-19)

sanctions), and historic dominance and control in alliance with local caciques and the PRI.[4] In one of my field sites, a *municipio* captured by the Zapatistas on the 1 January 1994, local civic groups closely connected with the Catholic Church have protested for years against the inadequacy of the public water supply and the misuse and disappearance of public funds. They demanded the removal from office of the president. The town's social activists suffer from threats and harassment, and sometimes illegal detention by municipal and legal authorities. Their petitions have been torn up by officials and thrown back at them. Their parish priest was vilified in leaflets and frequently threatened with harm if he did not leave the area.[5]

This town and its outlying rural area are typical of scores of Chiapan *municipios* all over the state. Since 1994 thousands of protesters have mobilized to take over municipal offices and sometimes hold officials hostage. Violent confrontations between protesters and state security police and opposing groups with hired guns, is almost a daily occurrence in Chiapas and illegal detention and disappearance of indigenous leaders is ubiquitous.

A current example of this type of militant action is found in a press report of January 1996, the period when newly elected officials of Chiapan *municipios* attempted to take up offices they had won in the October 1995 elections for *presidentes municipales*. *La Jornada* reported on January 3 that 18 *municipios* had been seized and occupied by supporters of opposition

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[4] A Chiapas regional newspaper reports in February 1994, one month after the uprising, that there had been 100 land invasions predicting there would be 12 more takeovers of *municipios* by opposition groups in the coming weeks. The common demand was the removal of corrupt *presidentes* from office and their replacement with democratically representative councils. The seized land was alleged to be lands that had been solicited by *campesinos* for restitution previously, in one case as far back as 115 years. (*Expreso* Chiapas, Feb 16/94, Tuxtla Gutiérrez:11)

[5] These acts are documented in the civic action group's monthly bulletins. Copies are in my possession dating back to 1990. In 1991 for instance they report the arrest without warrant and torture of five people, members of the civic opposition group, for presumed connections in the murder of a taxi driver. In April 1993 the group reports that they were attacked and their property was damaged and stolen by "people" of the *municipio* who broke up one of their meetings. On the same day the article says, the president sent a hostile group to the Church where they attacked and beat up two persons and tried to kidnap the priest. Later in July when the protesting civic group demonstrated during the visit of the Governor to the *municipio*, their demonstration was broken up and people were beaten during a speech he was giving. Other stories were related to me directly including the widely reported disappearance of two youths on the fourth day of the Rebellion. They were found by a roadside one week later beaten, tortured and executed allegedly by the army. It is widely believed that they were pointed out to the army by municipal officials as dissidents.

parties but in six cases the State Security Police had removed the protesters (*La Jornada*:11) In another confrontation in Oxchuc, where Reding reported that 100 percent of the population voted PRI in 1991 (1994:17), an indigenous group occupied the town hall denouncing the president elect, accusing him of destroying their meeting house and a *tortilleria* belonging to their organization. In the same period, two thousand members of another long-standing *campesino* group in Venustiano Carranza similarly, took over the administration headquarters of the president claiming electoral fraud in his election and threatening to meet force with force if the security police were used to remove them. Significantly, reported *La Jornada*, it was the first time in the history of Chiapas that 26 *municipios* were won by members of opposition parties out of the total of 111 (1994:11).

This sample of protests represent the general ungovernability in Chiapas between 1994 and 1996 and the lack of credibility of the current electoral system; the innumerable grassroots struggles for democratization at the local level that finally achieved in some cases, moderate change from an unusually conciliatory state government in 1996. Negotiations between the political parties and state authorities in 1995 and early 1996, resulted in the creation of a number of plural municipal councils. (*Expreso Chiapas*, Feb 20/96, Tuxtla Gutiérrez:5) One informant estimated that by the spring of 1996, 19 *municipios* had won structural change in their local governments through protest and negotiation. Specifically, formerly PRI presidents had been replaced by either plural councils or bi-partisan structures with dual presidents, one PRI and one PRD.[6]

In the *municipio* where the field work was done, a sit-in happened in the spring of 1995, that lasted forty days. Out of this struggle the people won the right to have a bi-partisan presidency. This was a hard-won battle that slowly evolved over at least seven years of grassroots organizing and education. Social activists, some originally from outside the

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[6] For example in Ocosingo a council was composed of five members from a civic organization called Organizaciones Autónomas de Ocosingo (Autonomous Organizations of Ococingo), supported by the PRD, and five members from the Coalición de Organizaciones-Cuidadanas (Coalition of Citizens Organizations), aligned with the PRI. (*La Jornada*, Feb 16/1996, Mexico D.F.:13)

municipio, acted as organizational promoters and facilitators. In cooperation with the Church, they trained people in group dynamics, and taught leadership skills facilitating democratic and participatory practices. They gave courses on Mexican history and constitutional and agrarian law, and printed informational materials and records of meetings. They established networks with similar groups in other parts of the state.

A community collective for education and social organizing met weekly to produce a local bulletin with analysis of community social and political issues. These bulletins distributed through networks of civic groups and CEBs in the area describe the regional, national and international contexts of local issues and events. As an example, one issue from June 1993 has a hand-drawn picture on the cover of a recent demonstration of townspeople complaining about the local water situation. It discusses human rights and recent abuses in the state and mobilizations across the region by other groups with similar problems. There is an article from an *ejido* on the changes they foresee because of the reforms to Article 27 of the Constitution and this is followed by a piece about hunger in the countryside. There is an article on national *campesino* organizations and one on the situation in Guatemala. No local press exists in the *municipio* and regional and national publications rarely arrive in the town. The population thus depends on television and radio as sources of news. However, since the electronic media is owned and monopolized by PRI supporters, it is notorious for its bias and distortion of the facts.[7]

The newsletter and popular education team as the collective calls itself, brought people together, *ladino* and indigenous, across economic classes and from different areas of the *municipio* including a reporter from the one regional progressive print medium, a small family

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[7] Jorge Castañeda, noted political analyst, in his analysis of the 1994 presidential election and the impact of the electronic media, reported that 90 percent of Mexican homes have television. He declares: "Television had one candidate--Ernesto Zedillo--, one enemy--Cuahutémoc Cárdenas and for a few brief days in May, Diego Fernandez [leader of the National Action Party-PAN]--and one strategy: to identify the PRI with peace and stability, and the opposition with violence and chaos....People were in a panic about change and Cárdenas, because they were convinced by the media without ever being given a differing or opposing point of view." (*Proceso*, #930, Aug 29/94, Mexico D.F.:45)

run newspaper called *El Tiempo* which publishes in San Cristóbal de las Casas.[8] The team is also involved in the facilitation, planning, initiation and subsequent reflection on, community social action.

Additionally, others were trained in popular education techniques as are members of the town's 12 Christian Base Communities.[9] Their members moreover, go out into surrounding indigenous communities and *ejidos* of the *municipio* conducting discussion groups that revolve around local concerns (e.g. electrification, land claims, human rights), interpreting the rural population's problems and possible solutions in the light of biblical readings. They cooperate with catechists and other rural lay representatives of the Bishop's "pastoral team" in the countryside. As a result, networks were created and consolidated within the *municipio* and beyond, and between town centre and rural areas that eventually fed into the broader, state-wide protests and organizations of civil resistance described below, and possibly, the Zapatista army itself.[10]

Before the takeover of the municipal building, the local opposition group I observed, displayed a high degree of solidarity and unity fortified by its connections with the Church. However, by the winter of 1996 it was divided. Two issues arose in 1995, which polarized this

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[8] The two owners of *El Tiempo* are Amado Avendaño and Concepción Villafuerte, a husband and wife team who for 25 years have used the paper to denounce human rights abuse and political repression. In addition, both have been key participants and organizers of the pro-democracy movement in the highlands. *El Tiempo* is the only print medium in the highland region outside the control of dominant elites. It published using a hundred year old printing press which broke down in 1995. European supporters wishing to maintain this alternative local press coverage, donated new equipment. This equipment remains in the custody of Mexican government officials in 1996 claiming the proper import procedures and regulations have not been completed.

[9] Popular education is a set of techniques for adult education based on the theory and practice of Paulo Freire, a Brazilian who first developed popular education for teaching literacy. The methodology was subsequently adopted by liberation theologists for use in their pastoral work.

[10] One of my informants who I first met in 1994 shortly after the Rebellion started, had just become involved at the community level as a local human rights worker. This person in the intervening years, became a member in the Chiapan Peoples Democratic Assembly (AEDPCH) and a councillor in the parallel government and later was involved in the formation of a new local civic action group, participating in the citizen constituted Tribunal and Popular Jury to judge the evidence of the state-wide citizen body that investigated electoral fraud (the Procuradura Electoral). This social activist is currently deeply involved in the organization of local groups called Comités Civiles de Dalogo (Civil Committees of Dialogue). The committees are part of the Zapatista strategy to create a broad national front, the Zapatista Front for National Liberation (Frente Zapatista de Liberación Nacional-FZLN) within civil society which will be discussed further below.

local movement. One was the complaint about the lack of democratic decision-making within the protest group that occurred during their 40-day action to remove the allegedly corrupt president; and the second divisive issue, was a disagreement over adherence to the EZLN strategy of boycott or non-participation in the October 1995 elections for state representatives and *presidentes municipales*.

The divided groups displayed a good deal of personal rancor between individuals, a sense of betrayal, and competitiveness with respect to membership in feuding civic opposition groups. People on one side, previously belligerent and confrontational towards local governing officials and structures, appeared to have replaced this stance with one of conciliation and to a degree, acceptance. The other side, after forming a new civic alliance, almost dogmatically, aligned itself with Zapatista strategy and tactics forging ahead organizationally with promotion of the latest EZLN proposal to form the Zapatista Front for National Liberation (Frente Zapatista de Liberación Nacional-FZLN) announced in the Fourth Declaration, 1 January 1996. The principle focus and task thus, of the dissenting group, became the organization of Civilian Committees of Dialogue (Comités Civiles de Díalogo).

These new local structures, the EZLN envisaged, would feed into a larger national organization, conceived of as a broad, civilian and oppositional front (the FZLN) aligned with the principles and strategies of *Zapatismo*. The main goal of this so-called civilian Zapatista organization is to contribute to the formation of a national liberation movement for promoting a peaceful transition to democracy. This body is envisioned as only one of a large number of pro-democracy groups, movements, social organizations and political parties that would compose an official National Liberation Movement (Movimiento de Liberación Nacional-MLN).

The CND originally undertook to spearhead the organizing of the MLN in early February 1995 but unable to unify its disparate forces, failed. The task has since been taken up by the Chiapan Peoples' Democratic State Assembly (Asemblea Democrático Estatal del Pueblo Chiapaneco-ADEPCH) and nationally, by hundreds of other social organizations.

COUNTER-HEGEMONIC FORMATIONS: A Concept of Political Legitimacy

In innumerable ways since January 1994, the Zapatistas have mobilized groups within civil society and contributed to their insertion into a long process of dialogue about new mechanisms of political legitimation. The moral authority of civil society, symbolized by the indigenous insurgents of Chiapas (Chiapas is Mexico!), and a new discourse on democracy and development, aims at replacing the old populist pact between civil society and the state-party, the source of political legitimacy since the Revolution. *Zapatismo* thus, aims at mobilizing Mexican civil society as a whole, with a proposal to create and construct new mechanisms and institutional structures that will be socially and politically liberating; that is, inclusive, respectful of diversity, human rights and dignity.

EZLN discourse however, maintains its moral authority by eschewing the quest for political power itself, insisting that civil society is the only source of legitimation for the creation of a democratic political system. García de Léon concurs that civil society is the "indispensable component" for legitimation of power in a true democracy. (García de Léon, 1996:8)

The current Mexican political system is in a structural crisis as exemplified in the Chiapas conflict, manifested in ungovernability by increasing militarization, violent repression, the decay of party structures, economic crisis and armed insurgency. The state-party's mechanisms of legitimation, "a permanent necessity of the State and the political order, heretofore, constructed and reproduced in Mexico only within the political order, have collapsed" (García de Léon:8).

In Chiapas in 1994, the indigenous uprising and the repeated failure to achieve political change through the electoral process, prompted the creation of three significant state-wide bodies claiming to be representative of civil society. The first was a coalition of 280 *campesino*-indigneous organizations, CEOIC (Consejo Estatal de Organizaciones Indígenas *Campesino*-State Council of Indigenous-*Campesino* Organizations), the second, AEDPCH (Asemblea Estatal Democrática del Pueblo Chiapaneco-State Democratic Assembly of the Chiapan People),a state-wide body of Chiapan citizens, and finally, the third, a parallel

Government of Resistance in Rebellion, headed by a symbolic governor, Amado Avendaño. Furthermore, the CEOIC declared five areas of Chiapas, Autonomous Pluri-Ethnic Regions (Regiones Autónomas Pluri-Etnico-RAP), symbolically and in a number of concrete ways, divorcing themselves from government administrative apparatus and resources.

These new organizations and structures represent the efforts of segments of Chiapan civil society to establish a form of self government, independent from the prevailing political system. The establishment of these bodies also signify an attempt of sectors of civil society to occupy and consolidate a newly created political space.

CHIAPAN PEOPLES' DEMOCRATIC STATE ASSEMBLY: Structure of Resistance

The formation of this body is civil society's response to the crisis of governability Chiapas faced in 1994 due to the war and the perceived lack of legitimacy of the political structures. Its organizers mobilized first around the need to search for a peaceful resolution to the conflict, prevent the continuing militarization of the state and the defence of the August 21 vote. The individuals, social organizations, and NGOs whose long-term goal became to provide impetus and support for a government of transition, played a key role in the fall of 1994 after the presidential election, by coordinating numerous acts of civil disobedience and mobilizations protesting an alleged electoral fraud. AEDPCH was the major player in the institution of a parallel government headed by Amado Avendaño, installed on 8 December 1994, the same day as the "officially elected" PRI governor, Robledo Rincón took office.

The earlier actions of NGOs in promoting, organizing and coordinating citizen participation in aspects of the first Dialogue in San Cristóbal (Feb/Mar 1994), provided an impetus for these broader and more permanent structures of Chiapan civil society. AEDPCH and the parallel government of transition symbolized a democratic alternative and an organized opposition force to the dominant political structures.

AEDPCH first became active in the month prior to the August 1994 election and the organization of the National Democratic Convention (CND) but its influence in the state

significantly increased afterwards. One of its major tasks was promoting local assemblies throughout the state whose representatives would then join, and participate in the state-wide body. In its first political declaration the day after the election it stated:

> ....The Assembly of the Chiapan People declare that from August 22, 1994, we are initiating the establishment of a government for the transition to democracy. The People voted and expressed their will for a democratic power. From now we are initiating measures and actions determined in assemblies of ejidos, communities, villages, neighborhoods, schools, work-places, cities, *municipios*; of social and political organizations. Our proposals and actions are a collective decision and act of the popular will..... We call on *campesinos*, fishermen, artisans, employees, teachers, housewives, indigenous communities; men and women of Chiapas, to realize popular assemblies from today to December 8, to define a plan of action and a program for a Government of Transition to democracy. (Declaración Politica de la Asamblea Estatal Democratica del Pueblo Chiapaneco, responsible for publication, Concepción Villafuerte & Jorge Arturo Luna, August 24, 1994, mimeo, San Cristóbal de las Casas)

Most importantly, AEDPCH was envisaged as a huge step toward the horizontal unification of the non-combative, pro-democracy, pro-Zapatista forces within the state into a coherent structure outside the sphere and control of the system of political parties. The creation of a government of transition in Chiapas was its major goal.

AEDPCH was founded on the coalition of four blocs within civil society: CEOIC, the indigenous-*campesino* umbrella organization; MOSOCI (Movimiento de la Sociedad Civil-Movement of Civil Society), a lose grouping of mainly urban individuals without party affiliations; the PRD, civilians with membership in the party but initially without officials within the regional party structure; and finally, a number of Chiapan women's organizations. The organization functioned through the creation of commissions to perform specific tasks.

After the February 1995 military incursion and the subsequent counter-insurgency and repressive tactics of the government and the military however, the major goal of the organization was diverted to the question of dealing with the threat of war and the effects of repression. Several prominent social activists in Chiapas, including Jorge Santiago Santiago, Director of a well known NGO, DESMI (Desarollo Económico-Social de los Mexicanos Indígenas- Socio-Economic Development of Mexican Indigenous People), were arrested on charges of sedition, terrorism, and treason for their alleged complicity with the EZLN.

AEDPCH quickly redirected its efforts to denounce these acts and mobilize people to try to halt the growing menace of a renewed military conflict and a perceived increase in government repression of social organizations. The focus for most affiliated groups became the promotion of a negotiated settlement to the conflict, the demilitarization of the state, and the humanitarian needs of the victims of an alleged low intensity war. Huge mobilizations, in the form of marches and demonstrations were held nationally and AEDPCH sponsored an indigenous/*campesino* march to Mexico City in March 1995. Nationally, hundreds of social organizations joined the protest in what the membership of AEDPCH thought, would lead to a prolonged sit-in and occupation of official buildings in Mexico City, forcing the government to back away from its military strategy.

According to a member of AEDPCH, and councillor in the Transitional Government in Rebellion, this tactic was called off quite suddenly. Demonstrators were advised to return to their homes after "secret" talks between "some" AEDPCH organizers and federal government officials that took place the day after this massive demonstration in the capital.

At this juncture the different sectors of AEDPCH were beginning to come into conflict over its stated goals, with a large number of the *campesino* organizations dividing over the urgency of addressing immediate economic and land based concerns and the more directly political and organizational issues (transitional government, non-party affiliation, EZLN allegiance), including the fate of the insurgents and their civilian base in the Lacandon. The Zapatistas at this time were clearly under threat of annihilation by the advancing federal armed forces.

Finally, on April 9, the EZLN-government Dialogue was reinitiated, but this time in the wake of a humiliating EZLN retreat deep into the jungle and the flight of its peasant support base into hiding places in the mountains. The army installed itself in outposts on territory formerly controlled by the rebels.

Other issues began to chip away at the unity of AEDPCH. A significant competition arose between some of the old guard *campesino* organizations with 20 years experience of struggle, and the neophyte social actors who were more closely aligned with Zapatista strategy and the parallel government. However, the solidarity of the organization faced its greatest challenge

from an offer of direct negotiation (separate from the EZLN dialogue with the government) with a federal government official envoy of President Zedillo named Dante Delgado. He was sent to Chiapas with resources to distribute.

On May 19, 1995 negotiations began between AEDPCH and Delgado, with the organization hoping for a quick resolution to economic demands and land claims with which many *campesino*-indigenous organizations were preeminently concerned. This occurred within two months of the march on Mexico City and one month after the EZLN-government Dialogue in San Andres was finally reinitiated. It drew a vitriolic response from the Zapatistas which accused the offending faction that chose to negotiate of "surrender", "treason", "corruption", and "disloyalty" (Communiqué of EZLN, May 20, 1995, Chiapas: *La Jornada*, May 30/95).

The same day six members of the symbolic government's council resigned giving the fundamental reason as, "a tactical and strategic error of separate negotiations from those adopted by the EZLN". (Announcement published in *Expreso Chiapas*, Tuxtla Gutiérrez, May 31/95) Shortly afterwards, Amado Avendaño and a relatively small number of leading peasant organizations withdrew from AEDPCH. The offices of the transitional government in San Cristóbal were vacated.

A PARALLEL GOVERNMENT: Symbol of Resistance

The government of resistance was a self-proclaimed transitional structure, ultimately aimed at achieving the transformations necessary to destroy the state-party system and replace it with a "truly" democratic form of governance. The actual vehicle for achieving this was to be the constitution of a broad based, national, citizens' Constitutional Congress or Assembly charged with rewriting the Constitution, and creating the conditions for transparent and impartial elections.

The structure was linked with, and generally supported by, networks of local (at the level of the *municipio*, the Indigenous "*comunidad*", and the *ejido*), civic assemblies, social action groups, and regional *campesino*-indigenous organizations. Many of the organizations and

groups involved originated before the Rebellion. Furthermore, most Chiapan NGOs and their networks and coalitions, have a history of facilitating the formation of, and supporting, many of these local and regional bodies such as those described earlier.

Finally, the so-called Popular Church in the Diocese of Bishop Ruiz, has, over 30 years, established a rural and urban network of Christian Base Communities and "evangelized" indigenous-*campesino* communities. Catechists, mainly indigenous, trained in the social action methodology based in the theology of liberation are key social actors in the diocese. The membership of the church-linked groups, and the bishop's pastoral team of nuns, priests and brothers overlap in their social, organizational, and pastoral functions with the majority of individuals, groups and organizations mentioned above.

Additionally, there are weak but growing linkages between some of the large peasant organizations e.g. CIOAC (Confederación Independente de Organizaciones Agrarias *Campesinos*-Independent Confederation of Agricultural Workers and Peasants) and the PRD, with clear indications that these bonds are being extended into some of the newly formed self-governing associations of civil society.

SYMBOLIC STRUCTURES AND POLITICAL PARTIES: Whose space is it?

In Chiapas, the separation between civil society and the political sphere has not proven to be as clear-cut and simple as theory or Zapatista rhetoric would have it appear. In fact exceptions and contradictions are easily observed amongst social actors and their groupings to this strict division of roles.

For example, Jorge Arturo Luna, a leading actor in several social and political movements, has been a key figure in the leadership of AEDPCH and the council of the parallel government. He was elected interim leader of the state PRD in early 1996 and continues to be part of the leadership of AEDPCH and CIOAC, one of the largest, most influential and militant of the independent peasant organizations. (*Expreso Chiapas*, Editorial, Feb 27/96,Tuxtla Gutiérrez:2)

Interestingly, CIOAC originated outside of Chiapas and was initially involved, before it came to Chiapas, in organizing farm laborers. In Neil Harvey's assessment in the 1980s of the three most important independent peasant organizations of the 70s and 80s, the Emiliano Zapata *Campesino* Organization-OCEZ, the Unión of Ejido Unions of the Selva-UU and CIOAC, he found CIOAC to be the most hierarchically structured, and the least democratic. He found it to be an organization that displayed a great deal of tension between the leadership and the base over top-down decision-making (Harvey, 1989:174). CIOAC furthermore, was one of the first peasant organizations to promote support for opposition parties within its membership.

A further example of how political organizing has creeped into social organizing can be found in the influence of indigenous organizer Margarito Ruiz, another member of CIOAC, one of the major promoters of the Autónomous Pluri-ethnic Regions, and member of AEDPCH. He was elected to the Senate as a PMS (Partido Mexicano Socialista-Mexican Socialist Party)[11] candidate in the 1980s with support from CIOAC (1989:221). CIOAC continues to be the principle promoter of support for the PRD amongst the peasantry in Chiapas. These examples illustrate how unclear the lines can become within social organizations between the political sphere and civil society. It also signifies that within these organizations, power is being contested by unclearly defined social and political forces whose interests frequently clash and result in the fragmentation of movements.

After the repressive blow struck by the federal government in February 1995, the internal difficulties of oppositional movements quickly surfaced. By the spring of 1995 as discussed above, there were conflicting perceptions between and within social organizations about how to address the immediate demands of peasants dispossessed during the army's actions in formerly Zapatista controlled territory; how to grow and sell agricultural produce, and feed the family; how to secure land that had been occupied and sometimes cultivated for next season's harvest; how to defend dissident social actors from violent repression.

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[11] The Mexican Socialist Party was incorporated into the federation of parties, the Frente Democrático (FDN), created in 1987 by pro-democracy forces headed by Cuahutémoc Cárdenas.

Thousands of hectares of land had been invaded in the intervening years since the uprising, and the leadership of peasant organizations was being pressed by individuals occupying these lands to achieve legal resolution of their tenure. Moreover, the possibility of success in resolving immediate demands in this second round of EZLN-government negotiations which began slowly and arduously in April 1995, appeared dim, or at the least, an extremely long and drawn out process.

The power of the state-party to use resources to coopt the social bases of *Zapatismo* in this conjuncture has been a factor that continues to affect unity amongst social organizations in Chiapas. Consequently, while *Zapatismo* challenges the old forms of political mediation and representation, at the same time, peoples' survival needs must be met in the short run. This vulnerability leaves them susceptible to political pressure and the cooptational strategies of the government. These immediate concerns fueled the demands and possibly, the political ambitions of PRD supporters and members that conflicted with the longer term political negotiations between the Zapatistas and the government and also the original goals of the Transitional Government in Rebellion.

By February 1996, the EZLN had only achieved a first "minimal" accord that was widely hailed as a step towards peace, but for those in dire need of all the necessities of life, it was a disappointing outcome.[12] In 1996 hence, the solidarity with these experiments in self-governance was dissolving and the blocs that remain are charting a new course that appears to be guided more by political opportunity than Zapatista ideals.

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[12] This is how the EZLN and its sympathizers described the accord on Indigenous Rights and Culture which was essentially an agreement on paper to legislate and initiate constitutional changes to entrench a number of agreements reached by the parties under the category rights and culture. The EZLN nevertheless highlighted the agreement's inadequacies because it did not establish a multi-partisan verification commission to monitor the implementation of the accord, nor did it deal in any sense with the questions of land and the modifications to Article 27 (*La Jornada*, Feb 15/96:3,8,11-12)

MEDIATING ORGANIZATIONS OF CIVIL SOCIETY: NGOs and the Church

The role of non-governmental organizations and the Church are especially crucial in the analysis of social action in Chiapas. They are decisive in the formation of networks locally, nationally and internationally and across sectors and classes. These linkages advance the free-flow of information about critical events, human rights abuse, and organizational resources. In addition, NGOs particularly because of their grassroots focus in facilitating community development projects, produce and disseminate research about marginalized groups such as the indigenous/*campesino* population. Thus, they frequently become advocates for the subordinate classes and tend to challenge the political and social status quo (Castro Soto, 1994:123).

This is not how the Catholic Church would normally be typified in Latin America yet in the diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas under the direction of Bishop Samuel Ruiz Garcia, the influence of the liberation theology movement defines the church's role as an advocate of the poor. This often makes this Church a protagonist towards the Mexican state and an adversary with respect to dominant elites (Berryman, 1987; Pottenger, 1989; Smith, 1991). Nevertheless, both NGOs and the Church have been accepted as credible mediators by two major protagonists in the current situation in Chiapas-the State and the EZLN representing the sectors of civil society supportive of democratic transformation.

The question of where they fit in García de Léon's conceptualization of civil society based on Gramsci is debatable and contentious because NGOs for instance sometimes receive and administer government funds, if not national, certainly international. Hence while they traditionally maintain a very arms-length relationship to governments, some degree of dependence exists in the case of many Mexican NGOs on international organizations who also receive money from their own governments or multi-laterally funded organizations e.g. United Nations organizations, World Bank.

The Church in comparison is self-sustaining with regards to finances but exists within a hierarchical and international structure that puts pressure on its far-flung membership and

authorities to conform to its doctrines. The Catholic Church itself is a key donor to NGOs. This is the case with several of the NGOs in Chiapas that were observed. This implies an even closer linkage than the coincidence in the roles each plays in Chiapas, and suggests a deeper level of cooperation and coordination with respect to their socio-economic and political goals. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to determine the extent of NGO dependence and control by the political sphere and all of its consequences, but it poses some interesting research questions and gaps in theory for future investigation.

Significantly, NGOs have become substitutes for government agencies and other social institutions (e.g. legal system, unions, the media), in circumstances like the crisis that Chiapas is now facing. This has meant developing and implementing models and strategies for service provision (health, humanitarian aid, technical advice), legal advocacy, information gathering and dissemination, adult education, electoral monitoring, economic planning and technical assistance. These functions enhance their role as mediating organizations by allowing them to address on a small-scale some of the deficiencies of governments by providing alternative strategies both to the State and their target populations. There have been clear examples of this during the current crisis in Mexico.

Especially instructive are the coalitions of NGOs who have adopted roles since 1994 that promote peace in Chiapas and support a transition to democracy. They have also developed, and in some cases actually implemented, viable economic or political alternatives to government policy and practice such as holding their own referenda, organizing election monitoring, and creating alternative development models. Above all they have been instrumental in the articulation of a broad range of social forces within civil society during crucial moments in the crisis that Mexico is experiencing (Castro Soto, 1994:124).

CONPAZ (Coordinación de Organismos no Gubernamentales de San Cristóbal por la Paz-Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations of San Cristóbal for Peace) is a grouping of 14 Chiapas-based NGOs that had worked in the area for years. During the first days of the 1994 Rebellion they found it necessary to unite forces to support the civilian population threatened by war and repression.

CONPAZ has various component commissions on human rights, nutrition, health and agricultural development for small-scale farmers (e.g. *ejidos*, and indigenous communities). It now publishes yearly reports on human rights and its member organizations provide education and technical assistance to peasant farmers and assists in the establishment of health services. The coalition's current major focus however, has been finding ways of ending the armed conflict by supporting a negotiated settlement.

The organization thus became the major organizer of security for the participants in both Dialogues between the government and the EZLN in response to a plea to all NGOs in the country from the Zapatistas on the 1 February 1994:

> With the purpose of reducing to the minimum undesirable frictions between the parties of the conflict, the formation of a belt of peace or a belt of security is necessary with a view to the Dialogue that will avoid with its presence pressure, intimidation or aggression by one of the parties in the conflict towards the other. (Communiqué of the CCRI-CG of EZLN, *El Tiempo*, Feb 6/94, Chiapas)

CONPAZ took the initiative to organize over 400 NGOs nationally into an umbrella organization called ESPAZ (Espacio Civil por la Paz-Civil Space for Peace). This organization recruited and registered over 700 civilians for the belt of peace that surrounded the site of the talks (Reygadas, 1994:229). After the Dialogue, ESPAZ with CONPAZ, co-sponsored research, and produced an alternative economic development document that responded to, and analyzed, both the government's offer to the EZLN (a 34 point plan resulting from the talks), and the concrete demands put forth by the EZLN from the beginning of the talks.[13]

Individuals from CONPAZ in 1996 continue to provide support to the peace process. They accompany EZLN participants in Red Cross convoys that transport the rebels from the jungle to the site of the current Dialogue in San Andres Larrinázar. CONPAZ also cooperates with the

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[13] Their document is called "Towards a New Path of Development?." Its primary assumption about development is that it is people centred and based on just and sustainable communities with local decision-making and control a basic element. The global economy is a complement to the local and the national and not an end in itself. Poverty is the result of the actual model of development followed so far that results in the unequal distribution of production and the exploitation of people and the environment.("*Hacia una nueva vereda de desarrollo?*", *Espacio* Civil por la Paz, May 1994, Mexico D.F.)

Church-sponsored Fray Bartolomé de las Casas Human Rights Centre in San Cristóbal organizing voluntary national and international human rights observation teams. In the summer and fall of 1995 they established more than 20 groups of observers in "peace camps" in and around indigenous villages of the conflict zone. Some individuals of CONPAZ also act as official advisors to the EZLN and the CONAI during the current negotiations.

CONPAZ has been effective then, in involving civil society directly in the peace process in Chiapas by uniting the forces and expertise of Chiapan and national NGOs into new networks. This has extended the role of NGOs into other sectors and classes within civil society where before they had no presence.

A second example of an NGO directly involved in the process of social and political change in Mexico and Chiapas is Alianza Cívica (Civic Alliance). Alianza Cívica is the articulation of a number of groups that have worked for years in citizen education and promotion of political rights aimed a reforming the electoral process and democratizing the political system.[14] In the months before the 1994 election Alianza Cívica conducted a national campaign called "*Juego Limpio*" (Clean Game). It carried out a survey of media coverage of the election campaign between the 2 January 1994 and the 2 July of the same year demonstrating the disproportionate attention given to the state-party and the president in both the electronic and print media (*La Jornada*, Aug. 9/94:20).

Using communication and education techniques they then sought to raise awareness of democratic principles and rights, and mobilize citizens to encourage democratic behavior by participating as electoral observers. For the election they organized and coordinated approximately 12,000 national and 775 international observers throughout the country (*La Jornada*, Aug 21/94).

After the election, Alianza Cívica as one of its members put it, "decided to pass from observation to action" (*La Jornada*, Feb 12/96). The form of action the organization chose was

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[14] The organizations that formed Alianza Cívica are, el Consejo para la democracía, la Convergencia de Organismos Civiles para la democracía, el Acuerdo Nacional para la democracía, el Instituto Superior de Cultura Democrática, la fundación Rosenblueth, and el Movimiento Ciudadano por la democracía. (Monroy, 1994:82)

national referenda or *consultas* as they are commonly called in Mexico. In 1995 the organization was responsible for three consultations with Mexican civil society.

In February 1995 responding to the national economic crisis, they organized and coordinated a referendum on the loan package put together by the U.S. to rescue Mexico's financial institutions, and its implications for national sovereignty. They also sought the public's opinion on the former government's role in the economic crisis and whether Salinas de Gortari should be formally investigated.[15] Finally, they asked about how the Chiapas conflict should be resolved-through negotiation or military action. According to their records 668,037 Mexicans responded in every state but three, 80 percent demanding the credit be refused and almost 97 percent denouncing Salinas' role in the economic debacle. 90 percent opted for the peace process. (*La Jornada*, Feb 28/95:20)

In August 1995 Alianza Cívica coordinated 40,000 volunteers in the EZLN's National Consultation for Peace and Democracy in which 1,088,094 Mexicans expressed their opinions from every state. The third consultation called the Referendum of Freedom was held between September 21 and November 20 of 1995. It had the lowest turn-out and sought the opinions of people on an alternative economic strategy proposed by a group of NGOs. Between September and November, Alianza Civica first launched a national campaign of public education that is outlined in a pamphlet called "Deudas?" (Debts?) It explains the current economic system and proposes an alternative. These public education campaigns are very accessible as they are frequently set up in the town squares or Zócalos. Videos are also produced and shown outside in a central park, or on the sidewalk in front of businesses with the intention of attracting the general population as they stroll around the town square in the late afternoon and evenings, an

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[15] The three questions requiring a yes, no, or no opinion were:
1) Should Carlos Salinas de Gortari and his collaborators be investigated and tried as those responsible for the devaluation and actual economic crisis?
2) Should Congress refuse the credit package provided by the U.S. because of the risk to sovereignty and productive development of our country?
3) Should the government reinitiate the dialogue and the negotiation and stop military and police actions in order to solve the conflict in Chiapas?

established social and cultural habit in Mexico. The Referendum of Freedom however, attracted only 374,652 voters from 27 states. (Alianza Cívica, mimeo, 1995, Chiapas)

Although as samples of Mexican public opinion these referenda do not pretend to be representative, they do represent relatively large mobilizations of the population on three occasions within a year involving themselves in a form of direct democracy. Civil society hence, has also been exposed to an alternative information campaign on issues about which the public is concerned. This effectively raises the possibility of other ways of doing politics, of challenging the "system", and of demanding accountability from, and participation in, the political sphere.

These examples of citizen participation thus whittle away at the monolithic State and introduce other concepts of governance where popular participation could become a viable alternative to governance by elites and top-down decision making. It has importance therefore as a symbol of democratic transformation. These public acts of civil society mediated by the EZLN and Alianza Civica and hundreds of other NGOs thus, may constitute part of an educational and cultural process whose impact could be the construction of new values and new behaviors of Mexican political practice.

The unmasking of civil society has occurred as a result of many acts of solidarity, communication, intervention, mediation and promotion by social agents, their movements and organizations not the least of which has been the Zapatista movement. Nevertheless, as Cuahutémoc López Casillas points out, Mexico is at a crossroads and one of the major risks is that civil society will not be sufficiently strong to carry forward the tasks that have been proposed for it (López Casillas, 1994:146).

The EZLN is perceived as a weakened and spent military force within the state despite its belligerent rhetoric. The resources to survive physically may be beyond the power of the movement to provide to destitute peasant families many of whom are now internal refugees living on the peripheries of towns and cities near the conflict zone. Simply, the threat of civil war in Chiapas and generalized economic and political instability, have dealt a major blow to

the solidarity of the Chiapan pro-democracy movement of civil society, its symbolic structures, and the allegiance of a significant bloc to the strategies and tactics of the EZLN.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The main questions that have guided this analysis are: Why and how is the legitimacy of the State being challenged by the EZLN and a significant part of civil society in Chiapas? How and why does the discourse of the EZLN respond to a broad base of concerns within civil society? How can the impact on the political system of emergent social movements be assessed?

I have discussed the political structure in Mexico and the mechanisms used to legitimate the rule of one party in Mexico for almost 70 years. Likewise, the analysis of the theories of development, liberation theology and social movements identify the underpinnings of the Mexican economic agenda and the strategies of its opponents. The Zapatista discourse is a framework for dissent against this system. It is presented in the thesis first, to highlight the indigenous/*campesino* perspective on the Mexican political economy and secondly, to explain their alternative vision of governance based on elements of a culture defined as "*México profundo*". Chapter 4 deals with historical resistance in Chiapas to liberal paradigms of development and to a social structure that excludes the rural poor. Civil society's response especially in Chiapas in the 1990s links the theoretical propositions discussed to the terrain where the outputs of the political system are being contested. These local and regional questions however have consistently been framed in their national and international contexts in EZLN writings. The call of the EZLN is for a radical restructuring of so-called democratic practice in Mexico to make it inclusive and participatory with the end being to democratize development and liberate subordinated classes and groups.

Social movements throughout Mexico have become more highly visible and stronger since the uprising indicating the beginnings of a democratic culture and the vitalization of civil society. This is partly due to an ongoing dialogue between the Zapatistas and civil society and

the responsiveness nationally of the latter to the EZLN's message and symbolism. The government posture from the beginning of negotiations with the insurgents on the other hand, has been to try to limit the discussion to local and regional concerns. It has assiduously tried to avoid the national and international economic and political implications of its policies in fomenting the conflict.

For instance, throughout nearly two years of talks, it has persisted in ignoring the EZLN demand to discuss the effects of neoliberal policies, economic restructuring, and national democratic and justice system reforms in the country as a whole. Consequently, in a number of cases, organized sectors of civil society have intensified their efforts to transform the system by creating alternative structures that aim at consolidating the forces in favor of transformation and articulating alternative economic and political futures.

However, the Mexican people have lived with this political culture with only minor periods of political instability for almost 70 years. Why is the established political culture being so widely challenged now? There are two answers to this question, one that has to do with the success of the Zapatista movement in constructing an action system (insurgent consciousness) based on symbols, a discourse and historical reason. This has appealed to large numbers of people and organizations mobilizing nationally under the pro-democracy banner. The second relates to political and economic instability created by the PRI application of neoliberal principles, and the consequent loosening of some the mechanisms of centralized control demanded by this economic project.

The best example of this is the weakening of the patron-client system of representation and mediation, in Chiapas, and the symbolism attached to the destruction of the State's revolutionary social contract with the agrarian sector; the end land reform. This was the regime's mechanism of social control and legitimation.

Evidence for this in Chiapas is the general decline in the importance of the role of the CNC as the local mediating political structure for peasant demands (Dresser, 1991; Harvey, 1994; Otero, 1996). The government under Salinas de Gortari in 1988 tried to ameliorate this weakening of control by adopting what Gerardo Otero describes as a neocorporatist policy of

direct intervention and subsidy in the countryside through the National Solidarity Program or Solidaridad (Programa Nacional de Solidaridad, PRONASOL) to attack poverty (Otero, 1996:15). However, Harvey argues that in Chiapas the program did not assume the grassroots character or control that the government intended by encouraging the creation of thousands of local grassroots committees to apply for funds and carry out projects. The program could not by-pass the old corporatist structures in Chiapas. Instead its goal to alleviate rural poverty through direct participation of the beneficiaries was subverted by *caciques*, *presidentes municipales*, and PRI state authorities as high as the Governor (Harvey, 1994:17-20). Furthermore, it was too little money and too late, and was not designed to address the root causes of poverty; land concentration, landlessness, unemployment or lack of support for peasant production. While undoubtedly it did buy some votes in the short run, the short term and limited application of its credits for community development made it ineffective at dealing with the root causes of poverty. The monopoly of benefits by PRI and CNC supporters furthermore, made its impact insignificant in terms of the existing needs of the poor in Chiapas and tended to create more friction and conflict within an already conflictive atmosphere (Harvey, 1994:20).

My fieldwork and the results of the last two elections confirm this. In Chiapas the program is frequently called PRINASOL by its critics in recognition of its vote buying objectives. Informants were always quick to point out constructions in the rural villages and small towns like basket-ball courts, improvements to central parks, and town halls that were funded with Solidaridad money. They also noted how independent peasant and civic groups were marginalized in the distribution of credits by the tight control over its funds exercised by PRI aligned *presidentes municipales* and their *caciques*. The program thus did not recognize the importance and representativeness that independent political and social organizations had achieved over 30 years of struggle in Chiapas. It took a Rebellion for the government and the rest of the country to begin listening.

Zapatismo defends the rights of the poor in general and the rights of the indigenous and *campesino* specifically by using moral, ethical and historical arguments. They demand to be

included in a new national project that does not submerge their reality in a system they view as destructive to their identity, culture and survival ethic. Thus the revival and appropriation of a nationalist rhetoric by the EZLN at this conjuncture is significant because it highlights the irrevocable loss of the nation's ability to control its destiny and by implication, the lives of its own people. This nationalist argument and the cultural symbols of "*México Profundo*" that primarily represent the oppressed and repressed majority of Mexicans, thus engenders a positive response from a broad strata within Mexican civil society enduring increasing economic hardship. However, there are other factors which help articulate the regional Zapatista movement into a national one which emphasizes the democratization of development. Other conditions and events within the political sphere including neoliberal restructuring and the economic crisis of 1995 have profoundly affected civil society and multiplied the effect of the conflict on the regime's legitimacy. The lack of transparency and the anti-democratic nature of the state-party, opposition parties, and indeed, the whole governing and legal apparatus, have consistently been challenged since the 1960s by various social movements, exposing each time the deficiencies of the Mexican systems of government and law. This opposition within civil society, frequently, small and local or regional movements of dissent, is in a process today of articulation and consolidation that some claim is a transition to democracy. This process aims at overcoming the paralysis in the political sphere where an effective and cohesive opposition party or the internal reform of the PRI and the system it controls, has yet to emerge. All these factors challenge the legitimacy of the state-party and the political system while they feed the fires of discontent with corruption, injustice and authoritarianism in the political sphere.

Indeed, this thesis has pointed out how in Chiapas political parties are often characterized as not being effective or appropriate vehicles for transforming society and also, how *Zapatismo* has tried to marginalize them as mediators between the State and civil society. *Zapatismo* therefore consistently privileges other sectors of civil society as vanguards of political transformation, in particular local and regional *campesino* and indigenous organizations, civic associations, the women's movement, the Popular Church and NGOs. Furthermore, it has

successfully exploited these groups and their networks to expand its influence and promote its cause.

The weakness of opposition parties of the left is evidenced in their inability as yet to articulate a broad cross-section of interests within civil society while on the other hand, this gap appears to drive the non-party organizations of civil society to attempt the creation of broadly based national movements for liberation like the CND, the FZLN and the MLN. In all three cases the Zapatistas have played a major symbolic and actual role in their creation.

The PRI itself has not been able to legitimate its rule having sacrificed its traditional corporatist and patron-client relationships with the underclasses to the neoliberal project (Teichman, 1996:150). There is simply nothing left to build their hegemony on with disparate groups within subordinate classes, the majority of whom are poor and getting poorer.

This majority however, also now includes a middle and laboring class who is suffering currently from a lack of job opportunities, economic and social security, and high personal debt; crime and increasingly, political repression. A regional small business-persons' organization from Mexico City, the National Chamber of Commerce of Mexico City (La Cámara Nacional de Comercio de la Ciudad de México, Canaco-Mex) reports that consumption in Mexico City dropped by 47.7 percent in 1995. Economic data provided by the National Bank of Exterior Commerce (Banco Nacional de Comercio Exteror), indicate a growth of dependency on the United States' market and the concentration of productive export capacity in fewer hands. It states that in 1995, 80 percent of exports were handled by 2.7 percent of Mexico's companies compared to 71 percent by 3.5 percent in 1994. Further evidence of increasing national dependence on the U.S. is that 83 percent of all exports now go to that country (*La Jornada*, March 5/96, Mexico D.F.:60)

Other data point to an increasingly skewed distribution of wealth in the country.[1] As a result of the economic crisis of 1995 where the peso was devalued by 50 percent, there were

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[1] "To illustrate the extreme concentration of wealth and income, the wealthiest Mexican Carlos Slim, the owner of Telfonos of Mexico, is said by *Forbes* magazine (18 July 1994) to be worth 6.6 billion dollars. At the other extreme, about 20 percent of the population-17 million people in extreme poverty- subsist on incomes of less than 350 dollars per person per year. In other words, the assets of the richest man in Mexico total more than

more cuts to government spending, an increase in the value-added tax from 10 percent to 15 percent, bank interest rates of 60 percent, and increases in the price of electricity and gasoline (Otero,ed., 1996:9). Privitizations of state companies continued with sections of the petro-chemical industry being sold off, and the threat in 1996 to un-load the national petroleum company PEMEX to private investors (*Proceso*,#1006, Feb /96:38,41). This added to the fact that minimum wages had already lost half their 1980's purchasing power and over one million workers lost their jobs in the first half of 1995 (Otero,ed., 1996:9). These stark economic facts have reawakened the Mexican middle and working class to the perils of global competition in a country living next to an economic giant. Furthermore the threat of de-nationalization of PEMEX, the cornerstone of Mexican economic nationalism, refuels an old but on-going debate in Mexico about national integrity and sovereignty. *Zapatismo* thus recovers the symbols of nationalism in its discourse and uses them to mobilize new supporters while the middle class social movement called *El Barzón*, in 1996 claims to have signed up at least 500,000 members in 30 states (*La Jornada*, Jan 31/96:52). One *Barzonista*, a small transportation owner, told this story to reporter Blanche Petrich :

> I bought a bus from the Alfa company with a loan from "*Banejercito*". They lent me 72,000 pesos. Month after month I paid until it reached 92,000 pesos. But the bank said I still owed 132,000 pesos. I felt like I was drowning. Three days later the highway toll was raised by 80 percent in Mexico State and the price of gas increased by 50 percent. The price of tires for the vehicle went from 260 to 580 pesos. My friend said I should go to *El Barzón*. (*La Jornada*, Jan 31/96:52)

The impact of social movements on the political system so far can best be measured in the weakening of the government's key relationships with social corporations like the CNC and the CTM and the growth of independent social organizations. Moreover, marked alterations in voting patterns have been observed in the PRIs rural constituency, and Chiapas is an example with its 1994 vote for the PRI halved in the August 21 election, and 26 municipal governments now in the hands of the opposition in 1996. The greatest symbolic loss of government authority

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ctd. 1 ... the annual income of the poorest 17 million people combined. Slim is not an isolated case: during the Salinas administration the number of billionaires in Mexico rose from 2 to 24". (Heredia and Purcell, 1994:10)

and credibility was the government's withdrawal from an all-out military solution to the Rebellion by opting for negotiations with the rebels on two occasions e.g. January 1994 and April 1995. Analyses of the violence and alleged public bloodletting both symbolic and actual within the ruling party in the last two years particularly, indicate an intense struggle within the PRI between those who opt for at least moderate democratic reform and those so far in control, who oppose it (Semo, 1996:108). Meanwhile with each new crisis, political, social or economic, disenchantment grows and more importantly, consciousness of the root causes of unequal development is heightened. Civil society is also more prepared each time to occupy the vacuums of power or political spaces that such crises tend to create.

While the discourse of the promoters of neoliberal doctrines claim these economic readjustments are inevitable and necessary for the long run stability of the economy, political instability is becoming an ever increasing fact in Mexican society. Yet the discourse insists that people must make sacrifices now to ensure the country's competitiveness in the future. During the regime of Salinas de Gortari, nevertheless, this economic project produced 22 new Mexican billionaires but put millions of ordinary Mexicans out of work. The neoliberal plan centred in the expansion of market economies internationally thus discounts the suffering of the unemployed, homeless and landless, national sovereignty, collective social responsibility and culturally and economically diverse ways of living to achieve its goals. The opposing discourse, the reverse discourse of the EZLN proposes people-centred development allowing for cultural and economic diversity, democratic decision making, and participation on all levels to create collective solutions for redistributing development's benefits equitably enough to prevent the horrors of poverty faced by the large numbers of poor worldwide. *Zapatismo* asks all of us that are affected adversely by the assumed amoral market philosophy towards growth and human betterment to stand up and say "I won't take this anymore!", then to organize and create an alternative future for a more peaceful and just world.

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